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THE
WATER WAIF.

A TALE OF ANCIENT NEW YORK.

BY CHARLES P. SUMNER.

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THE WATER-WAIF.

CHAPTER I.

AT WHICH THE WILL IS SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED.

"A parlous child; indeed a very elf!
Who hath on earth nought like her but herself?"

* * * * *

"I do not like the man,
For he hath that about him fiends could cry at."—**OLD PLAY.**

"GRIFFIN'S WHARF" no longer exists; the place that knew it of yore, shall know it no more forever. Yet it *did* exist, once upon a time, and, moreover, it was situated at what is now the most crowded and busy portion of the water-front of our vast city. I am not about to point out to you its exact location on the map, for, indeed, I do not know the precise spot myself, but I am assured, by a lineal descendant of the "oldest inhabitant," that it stood somewhere in the vicinity of the foot of the present Pine street on the East River. It was outside of the "wall" that enclosed the old "dorp" of Nieuw Amsterdam; and though, at the time of which I write, the city extended far beyond that line, towards the "Bowerie" of "Hard Kopping Piet," yet the wharf was not exactly a public one, and very little traffic went on thereat. It had been built by a quartermaster of the British forces shortly after the Duke of York took possession of his new province, which his princely brother, Charles II., stole from the Dutch in 1664; but since then, new quarters had been found for the government traffic; the wharf itself had first reverted to the owner of the water-front, and was now in the possession of his descendants.

A queer, old, rickety affair it was, altogether. Small, low and lop-sided, with enormous string-pieces, and four great posts sticking up at each corner, it had a marvelous resemblance to an inverted kitchen table thrown into a sink as

useless lumber. An equally green, old, rickety house, which stood on its shore end, added to this resemblance by representing the tank from which the sink might be supposed to supply itself. The huge water-leaders and pipes that ran along its eaves and projected from its sides, could be called the faucets to fill it, and the arched passage, leading to the wharf through the center of the house, was the sluice-way to empty the sink, without doubt. As only two windows and one door were visible from the shore, these insignificant breaks in the plain, dingy, brown surface, did not detract from the similitude, and the mouldy, damp, unwholesome appearance of the whole structure, completed a metaphor most apt and appropriate.

In the time of which I write—the year 1700—although the house and wharf were then not forty years old, the inhabitants of the city were divided in opinion as to how, or whence, it received its name. Nobody recollects any one of the name of Griffin having been connected with it, either as builder or proprietor, and the only reasonable hypothesis left was that an uncouth nondescript piece of wood-carving, (formerly, perhaps, the figure-head of a ship), which was placed over the archway before mentioned, might have been designed for a griffin, or other fabulous monster, and thus have originated the title. “Griffin’s wharf” was its name, however, and this explanation of *why* it was so, is perhaps as good as any other, because the figure over the arch was ugly enough, grim enough and indescribable enough, to bear the weight of any misconception, or other sin, that might be laid to its charge. When I add that the place was so dirty and melancholy that the sun itself seemed to shine brighter on any given place in the neighborhood than on it, and that the wharf and archway were literally crowded with nondescript lumber of all sorts, sizes and shapes, enough will undoubtedly have been said to give a tolerably correct idea of the premises. I must not forget to state, however, that the spot was very lonely, the main road running some distance inland from it, and the buildings directly facing it being old storehouses not much used or frequented. Not ten persons passed it in the day, and as for any one visiting the house itself, that would have been considered a circumstance worthy of record in the public archives.

On the bright May morning, A.D. 1700, on which my story begins, a mysterious yet pleasant atmosphere seemed suddenly to have pervaded the old archway notwithstanding its gloom, and any curious observer, seeking to discover the cause of so strange a sensation in that somber place, might have found that the charm consisted in the low, sweet music of a nursery song, warbled by the lips of a child who was busy among the rubbish under the passage-way. This child was a girl of nearly fifteen, yet she did not appear so old, by three or four years, when one looked only at her form, for this was slight and delicate even to attenuation, and she was not taller than a child of ten. Her face, however, impressed the beholder at once with the idea that her years were even more than the number I have given. It looked so wise and earnest and solemn, that it would have answered for the face of one of those early martyrs, whose martyrdom consisted not only in the final bodily immolation, but was a daily and hourly event of their whole lives. It was not beautiful, for it was too thin and sallow, yet it might become angelically so, were circumstances and surroundings to be favorable to its perfect development. The eyes, especially, were charming—even in the sense of that mesmeric power which is now no fable—for they were large, lustrous, well-formed, and of a *lightning* blackness, if I may use an adjective apparently inappropriate, yet expressing exactly that idea which I wish to convey. For the rest, she had well-formed features generally, hair of the hue of her eyes, and a form which, were it not for its thinness, would undoubtedly prove a model of grace.

The child's clothes were of homespun, brown and dingy, and though neither ragged nor untidy, expressed bitter poverty in every seam and fold. A straight cut gown reaching quite to the feet, and a sort of bib, or high apron, of the same brown stuff, reaching, in two lappets, over the shoulders to the waist behind, composed the dress—a costume in which Venus herself would have looked dowdy, and yet which did not quite conceal the latent beauties this young girl possessed.

Though so young, so delicate, and, as I have said, light-hearted enough to sing, the child was not playing, or even engaged in any feminine employment natural to her years. She was rather actually doing that which a man possessed of

ordinary vitality should have found no child's-play. She was using an ax, a heavy carpenter's ax, in the endeavor to split some old boards pulled from the pile of rubbish near her, into kindling sticks for a fire! And while she feebly chopped she sung, a strange song too, a weird song in the mouth of childhood, that told of hidden, yet surely coming danger, and hinted that her only hope, if hope she had, was in Heaven—in God himself. It appeared to be a *rune*, such as some Norse mother might have sung in ages past, and was uncouth both in idea and measure. It ran as follows:

Lullaby, lullaby, over the meadow
Rideth the Storm-king in glee;
And, through the whirlwind, there stalketh a shadow,
Over the sea!

Lullaby, lullaby, close to thy pillows
Hovereth dark misery,
Writhing, and wreathing high, out of the billows
Over the sea!

Lullaby, lullaby, Heaven still urges
The fates that are blessings to thee,
Fear not, though dark sorrows swell in the surges
Over the sea!

How, or where, the child had learned the song was a mystery as much as the song itself. The refrain at the beginning of each verse would imply that it was a nursery song; but what mother ever sung of sorrow and danger to her baby? There were many stranger things still in the life of that forlorn little child, and perhaps it was no great wonder that her infancy had been as uncouthly treated as her older years most certainly were. Leaving her to sing her curious ditty to her still more singular task, we must enter the old house for a moment and describe another character in the drama.

In a dark, close room on the ground floor, the only window of which looked out upon the crazy old wharf and the rushing tide of the East River, an old man reclined upon a still older bedstead, so frail and rickety that it was a wonder it did not fall to pieces with each movement of the invalid. The other furniture of the room was, in quality and quantity, in keeping with the couch. Four or five ancient chairs, no two of them alike either in fashion or material; a large, open

fireplace, the arch of which was almost in ruins ; a deal-table in the center, with the remains of a scanty meal upon it ; another smaller table close by the bedside, and several large chests, bound with iron bands and secured by heavy padlocks, ranged about the walls, were all that the room contained of articles of use or display. No carpet or rushes on the floor, no fire in the stove, the bedclothes dirty and disordered, and truly the dim light, that struggled through the dusty windowpanes, faintly illuminated a scene that was as comfortless as could well be imagined.

The man upon the bed was very old, and illness, if not want, made him look still older. His small, piercing eyes—cold and fish-like in their gleam, and of that indescribable hue which can only be indicated by the word “steely”—and his long, thin, gray locks, floating in disorder about a face wasted to emaciation, and seamed with wrinkles at every angle, made up a visage by no means inviting either confidence or esteem. Indeed, Martin Dale, having lived ten years beyond the allotted span of human life, lay now upon his deathbed with not one friend or intimate who would step across the kennel to do him a favor ; not a man or woman who would call him “brother” in the way of Christian kindness. Save the little girl whom we have seen under the archway, and who was a foundling forced upon his unwilling charity by circumstances beyond his control, no human being had sheltered beneath his roof for fifteen long years. During that time no man had grasped his hand in friendship, no woman looked up to him either in esteem or love. Alone, deserted, miserable, he was dying, in want of the simplest services that humanity renders to the meanest stranger whenever there is need.

And did he care for this ? Did no thought of the happy deathbeds he may have heard of, in the course of his long life, wander into his mind (for he knew that he was dying) as he lay there ? Did no longing for the presence of his children, or his children’s children—he had reared two sons and one daughter—swell his heart and cause his brain to throb as he lay there thinking, thinking of the dark river and the rushing tide that was so surely sweeping over him ? No ! Even in that dark hour his thoughts were malevolent. For fifteen years “his hand had been against every man, and every

man's hand against him," and now he only awaited the coming of a hireling scrivener to put the seal upon his life's acts, and go down to the tomb with a lie upon his soul—coined to cheat his heirs, in revenge, of their just inheritance.

For Martin Dale, though dying in apparent poverty and want, was rich—immensely rich. When the last misfortune of his life fell upon him fifteen years before, he had, at once and totally, forsaken the fellowship of mankind, and devoted himself to the amassing of wealth, although he had had enough and to spare previously. He became a miser in its most grasping, withering sense, and the consequence was that those iron-bound and padlocked boxes, ranged around his sordid room, contained the title-deeds of wealth that would have upheld a monarchy.

I have said that he was totally unattended. This was not exactly the truth, for the little girl had been his handmaid, his servant, his drudge, his slave, since she was old enough to be any thing at all to him. The story of the origin of their association was as singular as the association itself, and it may as well be told now as hereafter. One night, about twelve years previous to the date of the opening of our story, and at the time when old Martin was most embittered against mankind, he was sitting by his lonely fire, thinking, perhaps, of joys that once were his, and listening to the patterning of rain-drops on the roof and the howling of the wind through the timbers of the wharf, when he was suddenly startled by a heavy blow upon the shutter of the window that looked out upon the tide. Before he could stand erect, the blow was repeated with a violence that shattered the crazy fastenings and drove the sash bodily into the room, with a crash that sounded to the startled old man like the signal of doom. The blast that entered through the now open window extinguished the feeble rushlight on the hearth, and in the sudden darkness Martin heard his own name called thrice, as if from the water below the wharf. Shivering with cold, and trembling with dread—for he almost believed that the enemy of mankind was summoning his soul—the old man stood silent in the furthest corner of the room, and the next moment he beheld a dark form clamber over the sill of the window and drop heavily upon the floor.

"Oh heaven! is there no one here, then, after all my toil?" exclaimed a voice amid the darkness—a voice that sounded like that of a strong man weak and exhausted from illness or worse.

Somehow—he never knew why—the tone of that voice reassured the faint and frightened old man, as though an angel had whispered courage to him, and he at once advanced and asked who was there?

"Strike a light, for heaven's sake!" implored the voice. "I am sorely wounded, and have much to tell you. Quick! be quick, or I shall not have time."

Shaking now with agitation, the old man raked among the embers until he had succeeded in relighting the rushlight, and then turning, he beheld a sight which—if humanity was not entirely dead within his breast—must have aroused both his compassion and his fear. Lying upon the floor, with his back against the wall under the window, was a stout-built man, perhaps forty years old, dressed in the garb of a Flemish sailor, and pressing his left hand with all his remaining force upon his right breast, whence the red blood was flowing in a stream that welled between his fingers and stained his garments and the floor with crimson. But the wounded man was not the only object of compassion in that strange scene. On the floor beside him, seeming to have slipped from his right arm as he fell in his exhaustion, lay a lovely babe of about two years of age. Fright or weariness had stilled the little thing so that it lay perfectly quiet, but staring with its large black eyes upon the old man as he advanced, mutely imploring his pity and protection.

"Who are you, and whence do you come?" demanded old Martin, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment.

"It matters not who *I* am," returned the wounded man, in a faint voice. "The question is if I have strength to tell you what I came for. Take up the child out of the blood, old man, and give me a drop of some strong waters. I am growing weak, fast."

The old man mechanically did as he was bid, and having laid the child upon his bed, he brought a cup of Geneva from a closet and gave it to his strange guest. He then sought to raise the prostrate form into a more comfortable

position, but the wounded man, with a mixture of impatience and feebleness pitiable to see, motioned him away.

"Do not try to move me," he said, with a groan. "I have wasted all my strength in gaining access to your dwelling, and I have now but a few moments to live. Listen to me," he suddenly added, with startling energy, as if rousing himself to a last effort. "You see that child?—it is a girl. Swear to me, as you hope for Heaven's blessing, as you hope to rejoin your sainted wife and mother in that blessed land—swear that you will keep and guard her, cherish and protect her, until she is reclaimed by her own mother. Swear, I say, or may that mother's curse cling round you for ever, and drag you down to the nethermost pit!"

Without intending it, without even knowing why he did so save that the stranger's manner was so terribly impressive, and impelled by a feeling of mingled awe and dread, the old man sunk upon his knees and repeated the vow demanded—to cherish and protect the child until its mother should reclaim it.

"I am satisfied," said the stranger, with a ghastly smile. "Nor will you be less so when you hear that she is—"

A strong shudder ran through his frame, his words ceased as suddenly as though a hand had been laid upon his mouth; and, indeed, there had—the hand of death itself; for, with that shudder, the stranger's soul passed into the presence of its Maker.

"She is what?" shrieked old Martin, crawling forward on his hands and knees, with eager haste, close to the stranger's side, and staring with a hungry, questioning gaze into the fast-glazing eyes. "She is who? She is what? Tell me, I say," he added, almost yelling the question, and roughly seizing the arm that now lay passively across the lap. "Tell me, I say, who is she?"

The dull eyes opened once, widely, and stared at him with a horrid, blank, unmeaning stare, the body swayed slowly forward with the impetus he had given the arm, and then fell sideways to the floor.

When old Martin came to his senses again, the sun was shining in at the window, the body of the stranger was lying cold and stiff on the floor beside him, and the little girl was

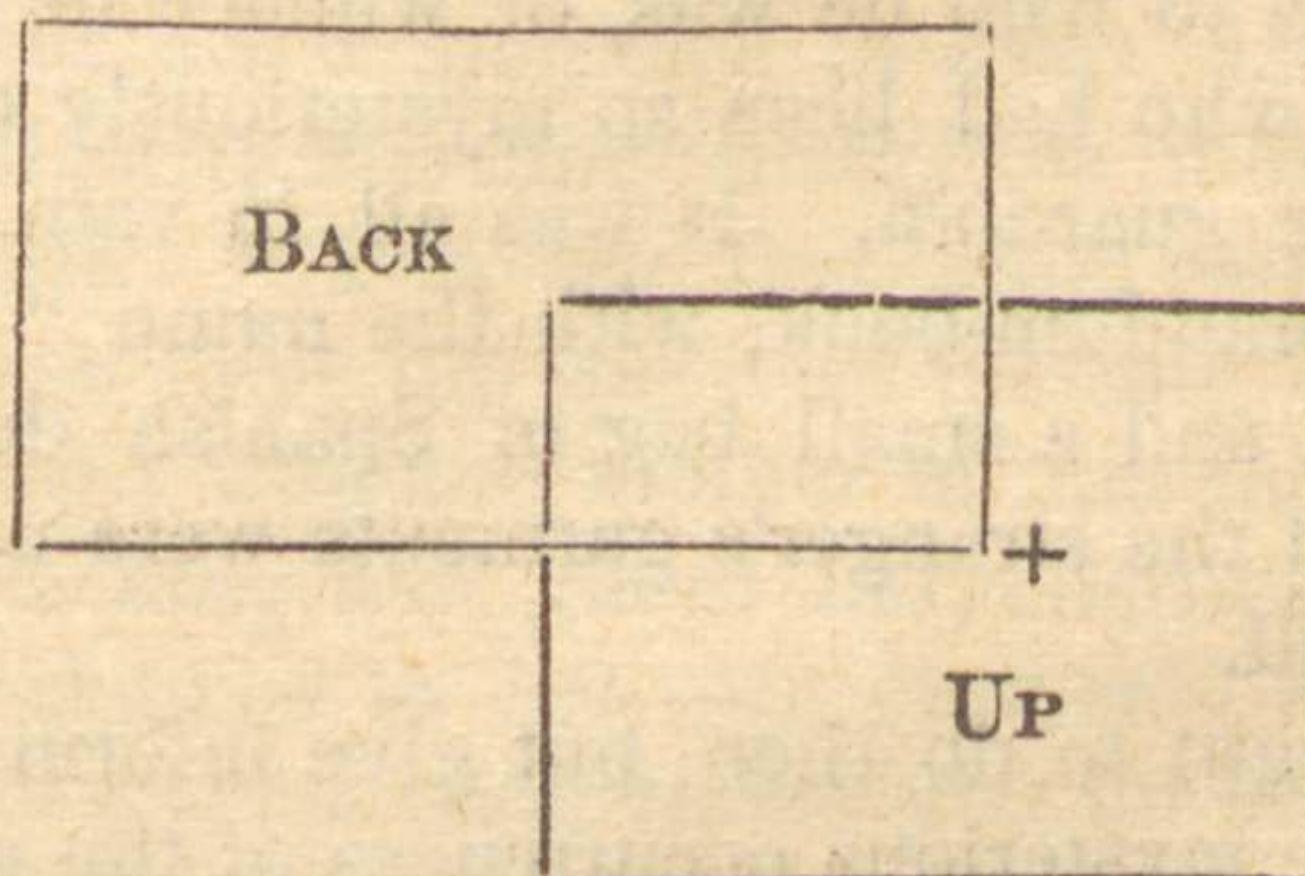
cried on the bed as though her little heart would break. Slowly recalling all that had occurred, his first collected act was to search the stranger's clothing eagerly and thoroughly to find if possible any paper or other article which would afford a clue as to who he was, or whence he came, and who the child was who had been so mysteriously delivered to her most unwilling guardian. It was all in vain. Nothing but a small memorandum-book, with the name "Gerald Foster" on the fly-leaf, and a small bag of Spanish dollars, rewarded his search, and the stranger's garments were not marked with any name at all.

He had nought to do then, but give information to the authorities, of the mysterious occurrences of the preceding night, and as there could be no motive to cast suspicion of any foul play upon Martin, the body was buried, and bonds taken of him that he would support the child and not let it be a burden to the city. His oath, as well as this precaution of the magistrate's, compelled him to do this, and, though most unwillingly, and wondering daily and hourly at his own foolishness in making the promise, yet he *did* pay for the child's nursing and care until she was old enough to begin her cheerless life, in his own house, as his daughter and servant. Nothing ever was discovered as to where the stranger came from, or how he got his wound, though the sentinel on the fort affirmed that he thought he saw a small black schooner stealing along the eastern bank of the East River late on that same evening, and believed that she came to anchor for a short time nearly opposite to Griffin's wharf, afterwards weighing, near midnight, and continuing on her way up towards Hell-gate. Such was the story of the advent of the young girl in Martin Dale's house.

Martin Dale was dying, but there still was some little strength in that old and wasted form, and he was employing it in a strange way for one so near his end. On the bed-clothes before him, as he lay propped up by many old pillows, a number of papers were scattered, and these he was arranging with as much method as though sitting in his usual health at his former "receipt of custom." His task was performed very slowly and feebly; still it progressed, and, at last, he picked up a paper the sight of which seemed to instil new

life into his withered frame, and caused his eye to gleam with a fire that could only be the blaze of fierce anger.

The paper was a singular one, or rather the figures thereon were singular, being in outline as follows:



and beneath this diagram were written the following mysterious characters :

" Rm gs + low slfh + fmw + i gs + hklg ds + i + gs yold dzh h g ir x p m nl s ri droo h + z i x s. 13 feet E. N. E. inner angle."

Nothing more! but the sight of it seemed to rouse the old man to fury, and the instant he lifted it, he screamed, rather than called, the words :

" Sea Weed!"

It seemed a curious ejaculation, and not at all pertinent to his thoughts, but the mystery was solved the next moment by the hurried entrance of the young girl from the archway, who, with a pallid face and in visible fear of him, advanced to the foot of the bed saying, simply,

" Here I am, sir."

Yes, her name was Sea Weed; all the name she had, or laid claim to. It was not inappropriate either, when we come to reflect how she had been tossed, out of the tide as it were, into that desolate old dwelling on the beach. She was truly an ocean waif, a weed cast up by the flood, to wither or to bloom, as God in His mercy should deem most fitting. Yet that was not the only reason why she had been called by this strange name.

When she first came into old Martin's care the only articulate sounds her infant lips could form were two syllables that sounded like the words "Sea Weed." Whether this was her

imperfect utterance of some familiar and beloved name, or whether it was merely an arbitrary articulation guided by no idea, could not be known, but it struck the fancy of the woman hired by Martin to care for the helpless child, and she forthwith christened the baby by that fanciful title, and it had ever since clung to her.

Sea Weed stood at the foot of the dying old man's bed in fear and trembling, waiting his orders. He glared at her, indeed, as if she, poor thing, was the embodiment of the thing he hated, and muttered, between his clenched teeth, as he gazed,

"How *did* I come to do it? What possessed *me* to adopt a foundling and swear to cherish it?" and then aloud: "Run girl, run, as fast as thy puny feet will let thee, and bid Hendrick Schloss the scrivener, once again, to come to me. Tell him I will take away my business from him if he comes not at once. That will fetch him, I warrant. Haste! there is no time to lose."

The child instantly darted out of the doorway, and old Martin sunk back upon the pillows, feeling faint and chill at the steady approach of the grim destroyer, but keeping his eyes fastened upon the paper in his hand, nevertheless. Sea Weed had not far to go, it appeared, and the threat that old Martin had sent by her proved potent, for in about ten minutes she returned, ushering in a little old, dried-up man, who was none other than Hendrick Schloss, the scrivener.

"Ah! Martin, Martin," exclaimed the little man, as he advanced to the bed-side, rubbing his skinny hands one over the other as if he was washing them, and grinning horribly, with a smile meant to be jocose, the while. "Ah! Martin, still as impatient as ever!"

"I am dying, fool," harshly interrupted Dale, scowling at the little lawyer like a basilisk. "I am dying, and do you suppose I can be patient now, when my whole life has not sufficed for the work I wished to do, and I have so little left of it?"

The bitter malevolence of the dying man's tone effectually silenced the little lawyer, and he only replied by a low bow, which he made as humble and deprecatory as possible.

"Leave the room, Sea Weed!" said the miser, casting a

withering look on the sycophant cringing before him. "See that no one comes in to interrupt us till I call ;" and when the child had withdrawn, he turned to Schloss and continued : " Draw that table nigher, and set to work. Cease your fawning and whining, and be brisk. You *can* be brisk when you have a mind to. I wish to make my will, and I have no time to lose."

No more words passed between them ; the scrivener obeyed his patron with servile alacrity, and for nearly an hour the two were diligently engaged in the business for which the miser had summoned the other. At last the will was finished, and leaning back upon his pillows, with a sigh of relief, old Martin commanded Schloss to read it aloud to him. The words of the singular instrument were as follows :

" In the name of God, Amen. I, Martin Dale, of the town of New York, burgher, being ill in body but sound in mind ; do make and constitute this, my last Will and Testament.

" To the end that my earthly affairs may be thoroughly and duly ordered in the world I am about to leave, and that justice may be done on evil doers as well as rewards given to the deserving as far as layeth in my humble power, I do bequeath as follows :

" ITEM : To my eldest son, Oscar Dale, I give and bequeath the sum of one shilling of English money, *and my direst curse*, in punishment for the sin he knoweth of, to him and to his heirs for ever.

" ITEM : To my second son, Lewis Dale, I give and bequeath the sum of one hundred pounds of English sterling money, to be paid him in silver, in the hope that every coin thereof may buy him a gratification of those evil passions and desires which have wrought him and his, and me and mine, such terrible misery and dismay.

" ITEM : To each of my executors, as hereinafter mentioned, namely : John Martin and Walter Barrel, and to my attorney Hendrick Schloss, I give and bequeath the sum of two hundred pounds of English sterling money, for and in consideration of the trouble they will be at in the settlement of my affairs.

" ITEM : To my only daughter, Ellen Dale, I give and bequeath all the residue and balarce of my estate, messuages, tenements, coin, bonds, credits, and all and singular every property of which I may die possessed, to have and to hold for herself, her heirs, or assigns, for ever, in the hope that she will at last forgive me for the wrong I have done her.

" ITEM : To the end that she shall never be induced to give aught of my possessions, which I now leave to her, to either of

her brothers or their hei's, I also leave her the paper hereunto annexed, the diagram upon which she will understand, commanding her to investigate the secret therein contained and so to act as its disclosures shall enforce upon her.

"ITEM: And inasmuch as my said daughter, Ellen Dale, has not been heard of by me for more than fifteen years, I hereby appoint John Martin and Walter Barrel, of N. Y., merchants, executors of this my last will, commanding them to use all due diligence in searching for and discovering my said daughter Ella, and in the mean time to administer my estate in such a manner that they may deliver it unimpaired to her or to her lawful heirs.

"In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, in the city of New York, this 20th day of May in the year of our Lord 1700."

The reading of this singular document finished, the old man expressed himself satisfied, and Sea Weed was next dispatched for two of their neighbors to act as witnesses to the signature. In their presence old Martin signed and sealed the will and acknowledged it as his free act and deed, after which he desired to be left alone that he might meditate on his approaching end. Accordingly, Schloss, after affixing the papers on which the diagram was drawn, to the will, withdrew with that instrument, and the witnesses, leaving the old man in solitary communion with the inevitable destroyer. The hours wore slowly on, afternoon waned into night, and finally little Sea Weed sought her humble couch in the garret of the dwelling, and silence and darkness were the old man's companions. Throughout that long and weary night no sound disturbed the quiet of the dwelling. No signal announced at what hour Death entered its portals, but when Sea Weed the next morning timidly entered the lower chamber, a stark, stiff corpse lay upon the crazy couch, and old Martin Dale had gone before the Great Judge to render an account of his justice or his revenge, and whatever other sins he had committed in his bedr

CHAPTER II.

■ WHICH SOME OF THE HEIRS MOST UNEXPECTEDLY MEET.

"Once more upon the waters! yet once more,
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider."

* * * * *

"He was the mildest mannered man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."—BYRON.

IN a land-locked cove stretching from the sea into the center of a small islet, the most northerly of the cluster called the Virgin Isles, to the eastward of Porto Rico, lay a large brigantine at anchor. The sun was shining gloriously upon the glassy waters of the secluded bay, and the long shadows of the surrounding hills were reflected in them with as much distinctness as in a mirror. A light breeze lazily ruffled the leaflets of the tropical trees which covered the slopes of the inner shore, and stirred up thousands of glittering little dust-clouds from the summits of the sandy headlands on either side of the narrow entrance to the cove. The zephyr did not fan the waters of the bay itself, however, and it lay sparkling and flashing beneath the genial ray of the day-god like to an immense and brightly-polished steel-plate, not even rippled by the ground-swell which at regular intervals heaved up the surface slowly, and advanced like some silent monster toward the white beach at the head of the cove, on which it broke with a thunderous roar that sounded fearfully loud amid the surrounding silence.

The noontide heat was so great that nothing animated was moving among, or in, the cluster of small white cottages which, en bowered in a luxuriant grove of palmettos, formed the background to the beach just alluded to. On the decks of the brigantine the same stillness prevailed, though under the white awnings which were stretched fore and aft from taff-rail to foremast, more than a score of lusty forms were reclining in various attitudes of repose. A solitary look-out, or sentinel, armed with a bright cutlass and a pair of pistols, paced

slowly to and fro between the gangways, occasionally directing a sharp glance seaward or shoreward as he arrived at the opposite extremities of his confined walk. But even he seemed infected with the *dolce far niente* of the scene and hour, and at last he halted at the port gangway, which just then faced the entrance to the cove, and leaning his elbows on the rail gazed with a vacant stare which had more of sleep than watchfulness in it, out upon the ocean. Indeed, it was a most beautiful scene, and the most vigilant sentry would have found ample excuse for gazing upon it for hours. As far as the eye could reach the glassy waters of the ocean stretched away to the horizon, broken only in the foreground by a long line of surf, which seemed to cross the entrance and form an impenetrable barrier to it. The entrance itself was more than a quarter of a mile in length, circumscribed on either hand by lofty walls of sandy brown rock, which terminated at the ocean end in two bold headlands, situated in such positions that unless a vessel at sea was directly opposite the mouth of the channel, no opening in the shore line could be perceived from that direction. On the summit of the most northern headland there was a small hut, in front of which the poles and arms of a semaphore telegraph might be seen, proving that the structure was a signal station. The two headlands, and the rocky walls of the entrance, formed a framework, as it were, to the lovely picture of the ocean in its quietude, with the white surf breaking (soundlessly at that distance) in the foreground, and the whole scene was flooded with a glorious golden light that made every drop of water seem a brilliant diamond, every leaf and stone an emerald or a ruby.

As the look-out continued to gaze upon the resplendent picture he casually raised his eyes to the semaphore on the summit of the headland. At that moment it heaved up two of its huge arms and began signaling. Instantly starting to his feet he made but two strides to the door of the poop-cabin, and at once knocked smartly upon its panel.

"Who's there?" demanded a deep, stern voice from within.

"Burton is signaling from the Castle Rock, sir," answered the sentry, and in another moment the door of the cabin opened, permitting a personage whom it will be necessary to introduce particularly to the reader, to emerge.

This was a man of nearly fifty years of age, tall and of massive proportions, evidently possessing strength beyond that of ordinary men, yet well-formed and even graceful. His face was regular in feature and strikingly handsome, but very stern, and the cold glance of his gray eye, and the thin, close-shut lip, proved that a volcano of feeling and passion slumbered beneath the smooth and placid exterior. His hair was slightly tinged with gray, and down his right cheek, from the inner angle of the eye to the articulation of the jaw, ran a broad white scar, the evident trace of a severe and dangerous wound. He was clothed in loosely-fitting but graceful garments of the Spanish fashion of that day, formed of rich material but neither gaudy nor ostentatious. Around his waist was a broad red silk sash, into which was carelessly thrust a pair of silver-mounted pistols, and at his side depended a heavy cutlass with a richly jeweled hilt.

As this man emerged from the cabin he paused a moment and glanced with an expression of pride along the deck of the beautiful vessel of which he was evidently the commander. And truly she was well worthy of such a feeling in the breast of the most disinterested observer. Far in advance of the usual naval architecture of that day, the brigantine resembled, in many characteristics, the vessels which we now know as "clippers." She was of about four hundred tons burthen—a very large tonnage for a brig then—very broad in the beam and having sharp, fine lines forward, while she tapered gradually aft from the waist into a beautiful run and counter. The high poop-cabin and elevated forecastle, which were then so common that no ship was built without them, detracted much from her symmetry, and even lessened her sailing qualities considerably, but her masts were models of grace and proportion, well set and stayed, and carrying a spread of canvas which would be deemed enormous even at this time. Sixteen caronades—long eighteens—frowned from her bulwark ports, eight on either side, and amidships, between the masts, rested a huge piece of ordnance, swinging on a pivot and a circular traverse, which carried a ball of not less than sixty pounds. Two small six-pound boat guns were mounted on the forecastle, and in front of the poop-cabin and around the main-mast, were stands of muskets and pikes.

arranged in symmetrical order. Such was the brigantine *Rayo-centella*, and her commander, the most dreaded and terrible pirate of the Caribbean, as my readers have doubtless ere this surmised.

Walking quickly to the port gangway, the pirate captain took from its beackets a large ship's-glass, and, adjusting its slides, gazed through it long and earnestly in the direction of the semaphore, the arms of which continued working while he looked. At last, they ceased their gyrations, and lowering the glass, the captain turned to the seaman, who stood respectfully behind him, and said, simply,

"Call the boatswain."

Every thing was done quickly aboard the *Flash of Lightning*—which is a free translation of the brig's Spanish name—especially when the commander gave the orders, and in a few minutes the functionary for whom he had sent—a huge, brawny, ill-looking son of Neptune, as need be—stood before him.

"Pipe all hands, Carl; send both the cutters away for the first officer and the shore-party, and fire one of the bow guns to recall the stragglers. We'll get under way as soon as they come on board. Tell Phillips to report to me as soon as he gets on board," and so saying the speaker turned on his heel and reentered his cabin.

The pipes now rung merrily out, transforming the quiet deck into a scene of busy bustle, and in less than half an hour the cutters returned from the shore, bringing the mate and some twenty men, who had been absent on special duty. The first officer instantly went into the cabin, from which the captain and himself shortly after issued, and preparations for getting under weigh were at once commenced. The crew of the brig, some sixty in number, were thorough seamen, if they were pirates, and their duties were performed with an alacrity and readiness, that would have been no disgrace to a more legitimate vessel of war. The fore-topsail was loosed, and the brails of the mainsail let go in readiness to set these sails. Then the anchor was quickly run up to the bows, catted and fished, the topsail sheeted home, the mainsail hauled out, and, with the breeze about two points forward of the beam, the brig gathered headway on the starboard tack,

and stood out, through the narrow entrance, towards the ocean. It was not long before she neared the fearful line of surf, which seemed to cross and close up the mouth of the channel completely ; but the mate, who had taken his station on the forecastle, seemed in no wise uneasy, and the crew appeared to think that driving headlong on to the breakers was an every-day occurrence. At length, the brig's long, tapering bowsprit seemed to project directly over the white line of seething foam that marked the position of the reef, and the roar of the tumbling waters was absolutely deafening. Just at the critical moment, when it seemed almost impossible that the vessel should escape striking upon the rocks, the mate waved his hand in the air, the helm was put hard up, and, falling off gracefully before the wind, the brig entered a narrow passage to the right, which, leading diagonally through the reef, formed a safe though completely concealed inlet to the main channel.

A few minutes sufficed to send her through this intricate passage, and, once in blue water, every sail was loosed and set, and the gallant craft flew seaward, bounding over the long even swells, that rolled in towards the land, like a bird flying to its nest when its young were calling.

The captain had paid no attention to the business of getting under weigh, nor had he deigned to cast a look, even, at the breakers, when they roared on every hand, but sat, silently ruminating, on the carriage of the aftermost carronade, on the port side of the quarter-deck. His reverie was now, however, interrupted by his mate, who accosted him as follows :

" Captain Ray, we are well at sea, sir ; what course shall we lay ?"

" Send a man up to the fore cross-trees," answered the pirate chief, rousing himself, " and when he sees a sail up to windward here, somewheres, let him give you the bearings of it, and then lay your course for that."

The mate at once gave the order necessary, and then, returning to the captain's side, appeared to await further explanation.

" The truth is, Phillips," said the captain, as if divining his subordinate's curiosity, " the truth is, that Burton signaled that a large bark was running to the northward of the

Isle, dead to windward, and, as I expect the Porto Rico treasure-ship about this time, I thought it best to run out and have a nearer look at this same bark."

A broad grin expanded the rough and sinister features of the mate, but his comment on his chief's news, if he would have made any, was cut short by the hail of the look-out at the mast-head :

"I see her, sir," shouted the sailor ; " broad off the weather-beam, close hauled on the wind ; she's steering about north, north-east."

This information called the mate away once more to alter the vessel's course ; the brig's head was laid as near to the wind as she would go, and every stitch of canvas that could be used was spread. While this was going on, the commander again entered his cabin, and appeared no more until the chase was in sight, which, as the brig sailed two feet for the bark's one, was accomplished in about two hours. Near four o'clock in the afternoon, the chase was within cannon-shot, and, though the people on board of her appeared to be doing every thing that was possible to escape, it was evident that the effort was hopeless. Captain Ray now gave orders to open fire on her from the pivot-gun amidships, and the third shot from that piece carried away the stranger's main-topmast, which, in its fall, brought down the fore-top-gallant mast, and the bark lay a wreck at the mercy of her enemies, who lost no time in coming to close quarters.

As the *Rayo-centella* was skillfully guided alongside the now helpless stranger, a volley of small-arms from that vessel's decks laid several of the pirates low ; but, instead of acting as a check upon them, this worse than useless display of resistance only exasperated them to greater ferocity, and in less time than it requires to relate it, they had lashed the two vessels together and swarmed upon the deck of the bark with such headlong rapidity, that all opposition was over with their final rush. But little mercy was shown to the conquered crew, and when the strife was over, only three men, and these sorely wounded, remained alive upon the prize's decks, out of twenty-two who had formed her complement when she sailed from port.

Captain Ray had himself headed the boarding-party, and

was conspicuous in the fight, dealing death to all who opposed him. Scarcely had the last victim fallen, when the pirate chief's attention was attracted by a shriek, which resounded from the cabin, and darting swiftly to the companion-way he dashed open the door, disclosing a scene which might well move to pity any heart not utterly callous to human misery. Phillips, the mate of the brig, had overcome the resistance which opposed the party headed by himself, somewhat sooner than the captain had done, and, instantly repairing to the cabin, he had there found a beautiful woman, who, with tears of terror, implored him to spare her life. Disregarding ¹⁹⁴ cries and prayers, at the very instant his commander entered, he had forced her to her knees, and was flourishing his saber over her head.

"Release her, Phillips!" thundered the captain, the moment he comprehended the state of affairs. "Release her, instantly, and go on deck. This is no time to spend in frightening women. The prize must be secured."

The ruffian, however, was too much excited to heed his chief's command, and still retaining his grasp on the kneeling woman's arm, he turned his head, and ferociously exclaimed,

"Go away! What right have you to interfere? I claim her as my share of the prize."

Captain Ray turned as pale as death, and for an instant his whole frame shook as with an ague. It was not fear, however, that caused this tremor, but the mere expression of his fearful rage, for the next moment his form grew rigid as steel, and, drawing a pistol from his sash, he made but one stride to the side of his rebellious officer.

"Mutiny?" he muttered between his clenched teeth. "By heavens! I did not think there was a man aboard the brig that would dare to brave *me!*"

And placing the muzzle of the pistol deliberately to the ear of the mutinous mate, he pulled the trigger. The ruffian saw his fate coming, but so sudden and rapid were the captain's actions, that he was powerless to avert it, and, as the loud crashing report rung through the little cabin, he fell to the deck, with the expression of horror still upon his face, dead, dead as the scores of victims he had sent to their accounts before his own doom met him.

The lady had fainted ere the catastrophe of this tragedy, and the report of the pistol brought half a score of the brig's crew crowding into the cabin, who stared aghast at the body of their first officer. Captain Ray, however, took the matter very coolly.

"The scoundrel was mutinous," was his only explanation. "Take the carcass up and throw it overboard. A little promotion will do the crew no harm."

Death in every form was too much a matter of course for the men to make any comment, and the concluding words of their commander were, probably, all-sufficient for his excuse, if they had dared to require any. They therefore silently took up the corpse of their late officer, and retired, leaving Captain Ray alone with the lady, who began to show signs of returning consciousness. As she raised herself from the floor, in the first instinct of recovered sense, her face, for the first time, became distinctly visible to the pirate chief, who, the instant that he beheld it, started back with an exclamation of surprise and alarm. On her part, the lady became equally agitated, and it seemed at first as though she would again swoon, when she saw the countenance of her deliverer. For a brief interval both the actors in this strange scene remained staring at each other, as though they each beheld a specter, and then, simultaneously, they both uttered a name in tones of horror and wonder.

"Ella!" exclaimed the pirate chieftain.

"Oscar!" almost shrieked the lady.

And then the pirate, starting forward, seized her arm with a convulsive grasp, and riveted his eyes upon her face.

"You are, you must be, Ella Dale!" he said, in hoarse and agitated tones, and paused, as if waiting confirmation of that which he dreaded to be the truth.

"And *you*, you are my brother Oscar!" groaned the lady. "Oh! God, that we should meet thus and now!"

For some minutes neither spoke again, and their labored breathing, really *echoing* through the silent cabin, testified to the fearful emotion which agitated their hearts. For sixteen years the brother and sister, who had loved each other tenderly in their youthful days, had not met, but their features were so graven on the memory of each, that, though changed

by time and trouble, they had recognized each other at the first glance. It was indeed a terrible occasion for such a meeting, for the sister now knew that her loved brother was a crime-stained pirate, and he feared that he had unwillingly slain some one who might be near and dear to her. Leading her to a seat at last, upon the transom sofa, for she was evidently growing weak from excitement and emotion, he stood before her in a dejected attitude, contrasting strangely with his usual haughty and commanding manner.

"How came you here, my sister?" he demanded at length, in a voice shaken by powerful feeling. "What dreadful accident has caused you to cross my fateful path in this mysterious way?"

"Oh, Oscar! my brother, I could not have dreamed of this!" she replied, all her previous horror of the pirate fading before the strength of her sisterly love. "What horrible career is this you are pursuing? Why do I find you leagued, nay, commanding pirates and murderers?"

"It matters little, Ella, what I am," he answered, somewhat impatiently, "though I might convince you that my career is not so lawless as you suppose. The important question is, how came you here? It is necessary that I should know, if I am to aid you, now that you are in the power of my crew."

Thus exhorted, Ella Dale—for she was in reality the miser's daughter, heiress, as we have seen, to all his wealth, though yet in ignorance of that fact—began a hurried explanation to her brother, of the reasons for her presence on board the captured ship. This explanation was long and discursive, as delivered by her, and we shall therefore condense it to a few plain sentences containing all that it is necessary for the reader to know.

Martin Dale, the miser, was an unloving husband and a harsh father. His children, especially his sons, found in his stern nature little to attract them, and the consequence was that, as they attained maturity, they were rebellious and undutiful in no ordinary degree. This was not so much the case with Ella, for she partook of her mother's sweet and uncomplaining disposition, and submitted to much that the sons found it impossible to bear. A series of frightful occurrences which will be explained hereafter, banished the sons from their

uncongenial home and resulted in the death of the mother. Shortly before the last events, Ella was addressed with honorable proposals from a young Spanish merchant, who was temporarily in New York on business, and thus had become acquainted with old Martin. In due time she reciprocated his passion, but when her father was informed of this state of affairs, he unexpectedly and utterly refused his consent to the alliance. It appeared that the young Spaniard had obtained an advantage over him in some mercantile transaction, and though every thing on the part of the young man had been perfectly fair and honorable, old Martin could not forgive aught that affected his only heart, *his pocket*.

The usual result followed. Ella, rendered daily more miserable by her father's harshness, was at last induced to consent to a private marriage, and this being, shortly afterwards, discovered by her father, he thrust her from his doors and refused to have any further communication with her. Her husband immediately returned to Cuba, taking her with him, and from that time her father had heard nothing of her.

She now informed her brother that her life had been one of strange vicissitude. Her husband had fallen under the suspicion of the Captain-General in the third year after their arrival in Havana, and was compelled to fly from the island. He had intended to take his wife and their only child with him, but an accident separated them at the hour of their proposed departure, and he was obliged to depart without his wife, though he carried the child with him. Since that time neither her husband or child had been heard of by Ella; and though his relatives in the island had treated her kindly, and allowed her an ample allowance out of his estate, she had passed a life of unavailing sorrow and endless regret. She was now on her way to Spain to meet some nearer relatives of her husband, who had kindly offered her an asylum, in what she was at last forced to believe were the days of a hopeless widowhood.

The pirate chieftain listened to this explanation with feelings which it would be hard to analyze. His bitter hatred to his father—and unnatural as such a feeling normally is, he had ample cause for it—could hardly be augmented by the knowledge of his sister's wrongs, though undoubtedly the

discovery renewed the fire within his breast. He made no comment upon the story, however, and in answer to her reiterated questions as to the reason of his own course of life, he merely informed her, in a few terse sentences, that he was at present acting under a commission from the Earl of Bellamont, Governor of the Province of New York, which authorized him to attack Spanish commerce in any sea, but he offered no explanation as to how he had first been induced to embrace so lawless a life.

A long conversation now ensued between the brother and sister thus strangely reunited, and it was not until he had been repeatedly summoned from the deck that he left her, assuring her that she should receive every protection, and, as soon as possible, he would forward her to her original destination.

By the time he reached the deck it had been cleared of the dead and of all sanguinary traces of the late engagement, and his crew were busy transferring the most valuable portions of the cargo to the brig. The captain's first act was to promote the second-mate to the post of first, and the other subordinate officers in rotation to the next higher rank from their former offices. This done, he informed the new first-officer that he had discovered the lady-passenger to be his sister, and commanded him to have a portion of the brig's cabin screened off for her use. Though much astonished, the subordinate made no remarks, and the command being at once obeyed, Ella was in due time removed to the brig and made as comfortable as circumstances would allow.

Night fell before all the valuable booty was removed to the *Rayo-centella*, but this task being completed, the brig was cast loose, and when she had gained a safe distance, the captured vessel was set on fire in several places. By the brilliant light of her blazing hull and spars, the pirate vessel's sails were sheeted home, and she dashed away toward the islet, her foaming track illuminated by a sinister and lurid gleam that told a horrid tale of piracy and murder.

CHAPTER III.

SEA WEED MAKES A DISCOVERY, AND THE LAST HEIR JOINS THE FAMILY PARTY IN A SINGULAR MANNER.

"They say the course of true love never doth run smooth,
But here we have a sample of a marriage made in heaven."—ANON.

"The Fates conspire that he may not escape,
And he is captive to his fiercest foe."—THE CRUSADERS.

NEARLY a year has elapsed since the death of Martin Dale when we next meet his quondam ward, Sea Weed. On the final settlement of the miser's affairs, it was found that no provision, save the bond he had executed to the authorities when she was so strangely committed to his care, had been made by him for her support. This, however, secured to her about sixty pounds sterling per annum—a sum that, in those days, with her simple tastes and desires, would provide for all her necessities. The obligation of the bond upon the miser's estate would, nevertheless, expire on the day she attained her majority, and, with a foresight much beyond her years, she determined to employ the interval in the endeavor to fit herself for some employment which would, after that time, afford her sustenance. Accordingly she took into her confidence the good woman who had been her nurse in infancy, with whom she had gone to live immediately after the funeral. This motherly old soul, a poor, hard-working person herself, was one of the best counselors she could have chosen, and after due deliberation advised her to learn the trade of a seamstress—an occupation that, in the olden time, was better paid and much more respected than it can ever hope to be again.

Strengthened by this advice, which also chimed with her own views, Sea Weed bound herself for three years to a dress-maker, who enjoyed the greater part of the custom of the court-end of the "city," the family of the Governor himself, the Earl of Bellamont being among her patrons. Sea Weed, when we renew her acquaintance, had been thus engaged

for more than six months, and was not only learning rapidly, but was pleased and contented with her occupation. She had improved wonderfully, also, both in mind and person, since her release from the slavery of her life at the miser's, and in the robust beauty who now plied her needle busily during the day at Madame Ficheux', and walked with her fellow'-apprentices on the Battery in the moonlight evenings, few would have recognized the little pale witch of a child whom we have seen chopping sticks under the old archway at Griffin's wharf.

As we have said, her mind had also improved, for among the few grains of learning which she had been able to pick up in her old life, reading had been the foremost, and was now her greatest solace and recreation. She had chosen her books, too, with more good sense than an untrained girl would be naturally supposed to exhibit ; but it has been discovered, doubtless, by the reader, ere this, that Sea Weed was no ordinary girl—that she possessed a taste which led her to prefer a substantial good to an empty pleasure. The consequence was that she was beginning to acquire an education which, though desultory and unguided, was, in a measure, solid and legitimate, and destined to aid her greatly in her future life.

An important event in Sea Weed's monotonous life now approaching, was fated to exert a great influence upon her fortune. Her quickness and good sense already had obtained for her a prominent place among her fellow-apprentices, and in the regard of her mistress, who often, when pressed with business, committed work to her hands which ordinarily would have been given to one of the more experienced journeywomen. One such event occurred on the occasion of a ball given at Government House, the residence of the Earl of Bellamont. A costly dress had been intrusted to Sea Weed to make up for a daughter of the earl, and when it was finished, she repaired with Madame Ficheux to the mansion in order to assist in trying it on. While thus engaged, her marvelous beauty and self-possessed manner attracted the attention of the lady to whom the dress belonged, and so interested did she become, that she requested the milliner to allow her apprentice to remain at the mansion during the afternoon, to aid her in having some alterations made in other dresses.

Through the day she made many occasions for conversation with Miss Dale, (which was the title Sea Weed had adopted, having no other name,) and was as much struck with her sound good sense as she had been with her beauty. From that time the Lady Caroline patronized the young seamstress, and neglected no opportunity of having her at the mansion, ostensibly to exercise her skill in dressmaking, but, in reality to enjoy the simplicity and freshness of Sea Weed's manner and conversation. Madame Ficheux, a kind, motherly old lady, with a soul far above buttons, well knew how advantageous such a patroness would be to her favorite apprentice in the future, and therefore rather encouraged the intimacy, for such it soon became. Lady Caroline's wardrobe was, after a time, placed in perfect order, but she still required the attendance of our heroine, and, rather Quixotically, began to teach her other things beside dressmaking. Sea Weed had a fine voice and a correct ear for music, and Lady Caroline, whose life was somewhat dull in her grand home, found a rich fund of pleasure in cultivating this talent in her *protégé*.

Thus the time wore on, and, at last, the event so important to Sea Weed occurred. When her pupil was so far advanced as to do credit to her teacher, Lady Caroline resolved to "bring her out," as it is called, and for this purpose she gave a private concert, to which only the household of the earl and its intimate friends were invited. Sea Weed acquitted herself well; nor was her head turned by the praises liberally bestowed upon her. A result both unexpected and bewildering followed, however, as a consequence of this modest display. Among the audience was a young man who had lately arrived from England as secretary to the Governor, and this youth fell violently in love with the poor seamstress.

That she was a poor seamstress, and nothing but a humble dependant upon the favor of Lady Caroline, Lawrence Vail speedily discovered, but, as his own fortune consisted only of his personal talents, (his father being only a poor lieutenant in the English navy,) and, above all, because he was an honorable gentleman, he came to the conclusion that her poverty ought not, and should not, be an obstacle to their union, if she could be induced to listen favorably to his suit.

He at once enlisted Lady Caroline in his favor, through the

mediation of her father. When he informed the Earl of Bellamont of his sudden passion and his determination, the earl, who really had taken quite a fancy to his young secretary, kindly promised to use his influence with his daughter to induce her to allow the young man opportunities of making a favorable impression on her friend. This was a new and delightful excitement to Lady Caroline, and she entered into the scheme with zest. Sea Weed was called to the mansion more frequently than ever, and scarcely a day passed that Lawrence did not have an opportunity of conversing with her in the presence of Lady Caroline, who, however, always kept at a discreet distance whenever she could make an excuse to do so. Lawrence was a very agreeable and a very handsome young man; it is therefore not very surprising that poor Sea Weed awoke one day to the astounding discovery that she was really and truly in love with the earl's secretary!

At first the knowledge of this fact made her wretched, because she thought it a hopeless idea that one so much above her in social rank should ever reciprocate her regard; but one day, when Lady Caroline had good-naturedly left the room for a few moments, at the secretary's whispered request, Sea Weed was more than ever astonished to find her idol at her feet, beseeching her to take pity on him and accept him as her husband.

The course of true love certainly ran smoothly on this occasion, and when she was convinced that her lover was really in earnest, Sea Weed modestly and joyfully accepted him. Lady Caroline was, of course, immediately made the confidante of an affair of which she had all along been cognizant, and the cup of Sea Weed's happiness was full when she found that her lover was as poor as herself, and very little above her in rank.

Lawrence Vail's father was away at sea, and could not be consulted, but his son was confident that, as he had risen from the ranks himself, he would make no objection to so humble a daughter-in-law, especially (as Lawrence declared) as she was so great a treasure in herself. Beside this, Lawrence was of age, and, having his own way to make in the world, was entitled to decide for himself. On Sea Weed's

part she had only Lady Caroline to consult, and that lady had long ago become a conspirator to this very end. It was therefore decided that the match should go forward as speedily as possible, Lady Caroline becoming responsible for the bride's *trousseau*, and the earl promising to confer a lucrative office upon the bridegroom as soon as they should be married. Every thing, therefore, being in fair train for a happy *dénouement*, we can leave the lovers in peace for a time, while we attend to the movements of certain of our other characters.

After the capture of the Porto Rico treasure-ship, the brigantine returned to her anchorage in the cove, and for several weeks remained there quietly, the crew busied in fitting her up for a longer voyage than she had lately undertaken. Captain Ray—as we shall yet continue to call him, though his real name, as the reader now knows, was Dale—had, in fact, determined to run across the Atlantic to the coast of Spain and land his sister at some out-of-the-way point whence she could make her way to her original destination. Though after the manner of woman generally, Ella made every allowance for her brother, believing his story of the commission from the Governor of the Province of New York, and laying to the account of legitimate war the atrocities which she felt that he and his crew must have committed, yet, their intercourse was not satisfactory, and her position on the islet was not only strange but very uncomfortable. In this anomalous position it was not likely that, (after the first interview, when the thought of their childhood's affection was uppermost,) any great amount of confidence should be exchanged between them, and owing to this natural reticence neither had as yet become acquainted with any further particulars in the other's life.

The monotony and singularity of her situation played upon Ella's health, and Oscar, fully recognizing this, hastened the preparations for departure as much as possible. At last all was ready, and on a fine morning, about six weeks subsequent to the capture of the treasure-ship, the brigantine got under weigh and stood out through the narrow channel, with a leading wind that wafted her rapidly from the shores of the "ovely isle." Ere nightfall its bold outline had sunk beneath

the horizon and they were bounding over the lonely ocean with only the rolling billows and golden sky to gaze upon.

As already remarked, the discipline of the brig's crew was perfect. How it was maintained, the fate of Phillips, the former mate, affords a striking example, and the fact itself will no longer appear singular. There was nothing, therefore, to offend the sight, or feelings, of Ella when she came upon deck the morning after their departure from the isle. The crew were well clothed, attending to their various duties about the decks after the manner usual in a ship-of-war; the decks themselves were scrupulously clean, and every rope and brace in the rigging in its proper place. It was even an interesting contrast after the experience she had of the slovenly method pursued on board the old Spanish bark, and the novelty of the picture attracted while it awed her. Seated upon a comfortable wooden bench under the awning aft, she occupied herself in watching the busy idleness of the numerous crew, and in gazing upon the rolling surges that, with power sufficient towhelm the frail vessel in an instant, bore her up instead, and forced her swiftly onward to her destination. Her brother paced silently to and fro on the western side of the quarter deck, passing within a few feet of her at each turn, but speaking no word and seemingly preoccupied with melancholy thought.

Suddenly, when the long-continued silence had grown positively oppressive, the monotonous creaking of the blocks in the rigging being the only sound that had broken the stillness for many minutes, the look-out at the foremast cross-trees hailed the deck.

"On deck there! Sail oh!"

"Ay, ay! Where away?" returned the mate, who had been leaning over the rail of the weather gangway lost in thought.

"Two points for'ard o' the weather-beam and standing right across our course," replied the look-out.

"What does she look like?" hailed the mate again.

"I can only see her topsails," answered the sailor, "but they've got the cut of a man-o'-war's, if I'm any judge."

The mate turned and looked at Captain Ray significantly. The latter, who had paused in his walk at the break of the

quarter-deck, smiled rather sarcastically, and nodded his head. His subordinate immediately took the spy-glass from its beackets by the gangway, and without a word, went forward to the fore-rigging, which he began to ascend with the agility of a cat. Captain Ray turned on his heel again, and walked slowly to and fro as before.

When the first-officer reached the cross-trees he passed his left arm around the slender top-gallant mast, and steady-ing the telescope over the shoulder of the sailor who was stationed there, took a long and deliberate survey of the strange sail which, before he had concluded his inspection, had risen until her hulls became visible. The enormous spread of her lower yards and the frowning tier of ports along her side plainly disclosed her character, and left it no longer doubtful that she was a frigate of the largest class, while the red cross of Britain floating from her peak bore witness to her nationality. Possessing himself of all these items, and the fact that the firigate's look-outs had observed the brigantine, for she was steering in such a direction that she would inevitably cross the course of the *Rayo-centella* in due time, the mate closed the glass and descending to the deck made his way aft to his commander and reported all he had seen.

The latter, singular as it may appear, seemed to be in no wise disturbed by the communication personally, but crossing the deck he informed his sister that they were about to speak a vessel, whose intentions might not be friendly, and she had, therefore, better go below.

Somewhat alarmed, Ella obeyed the suggestion at once, and accordingly he conducted her to the cabin, from which he emerged again, shortly, bearing a large bundle of flags of different colors, and a small book which was bound with a cover of lead. A broad grin instantly displayed itself on the countenance of the mate when he saw this strangely-covered book, and though he had appeared somewhat anxious previously, the sight of that magic volume seemed at once to banish his fears. The mystery of this change was speedily solved when the volume was opened, for on its title page was emblazoned in large letters the legend, "Signals of the West India Fleet, of the British Navy," and, to an adept, the use of that little book, in such an emergency as that now presenting itself, was plain.

"Goin' to fight 'em with their own guns, Captain?" said the mate, still chuckling.

"Yes," answered the pirate, quietly. "The *Rayo* becomes from this moment the dispatch brig *Spite*, of the West India squadron; at least until we get clear of our friend to windward. Send two of the steadiest men aft to act as signal-quartermasters, and run up the British Union-Jack to the peak at once."

His orders were instantly obeyed, and while they were in course of execution he proceeded to arrange the many-colored flags he had brought up from the cabin, in such a way that they might be easily distinguished and handled. The frigate was now plainly visible from the deck, coming down upon them as the mate expressed it "with a bone in her mouth," and rapidly nearing them every moment. In less than an hour she was within shot directly ahead of the brig and, firing a gun to leeward, she backed her main-topsail and laid to, awaiting the coming of the smaller vessel. Steadily the latter continued on her course until she was within a quarter of a mile of the frigate, when three small rolls of bunting rose swiftly to the mizzen truck of the man-of-war, unfurling when they reached that altitude, into three signal-flags.

"Blue, crossed with a straight bar of white," said Captain Ray, describing the flags as he gazed at them through his glass; "red with white circle in center, plain blue underneath."

"Upper flag, 10," read one of the quartermasters, who held the lead-covered book, "middle flag 5, under flag 'what?'"

"105," repeated Captain Ray, "and 'what ship is that?' is what it means."

"105 is the *Medusa*, 38," said the quartermaster, turning over the leaves of the book. "Captain Sir Guy Howard, home squadron."

"All right," answered Captain Ray, "if she's of the home squadron we can fool them nicely, for they won't know the dispatch brig."

While he was making this remark he had been busy tying a yellow flag with a black cross and a red one with a white circle in the center, on the signal-halyards, and, as he concluded, these rose steadily aloft and floated from the main truck.

"95, sir," said Lieutenant Lewis Vail, the executive officer

of the *Medusa*, to his commander, as he saw these flags shown on board the brigantine. "The dispatch brig, *Spite*, of the West India Fleet, Lieutenant Henry Moore, commanding."

"Ha! Harry Moore, hey?" said Sir Guy stumping aft on his gouty toe. "I knew him when we were middies together in the *Lancaster*. Signal him to run under our lee and come on board. Poor Harry, he don't seem to have got on very fast," and the gouty captain gave a self-satisfied chuckle as he contrasted his own success with that of his friend—a success, we may remark, owing entirely to the fact that his aunt had been the mistress of his king.

The signal he had ordered was immediately made, but in reply to it a flag marked with blue and white checkered squares was run up on board the brigantine.

"He has run up the 'special dispatch flag,' Sir Guy," reported Lieutenant Vail. "We can't stop him, but we can speak him as he runs across our stern."

"Very well, sir," was the only answer of Sir Guy as he turned away. The disappointment of not shaking his *old friend* by the hand did not seem to affect him much, the truth being that Sir Guy Howard was so intensely selfish that his only real friend was himself.

By this time the brigantine was close under the stern of the frigate, and slowly creeping to windward.

"*Medusa*, ahoy!" rang out a clear voice from on board of her. "Lieutenant Moore's compliments to Sir Guy Howard. He's quite ill in his cabin, and we've special dispatches."

"All right. Sir Guy's compliments to the lieutenant," hailed Lieutenant Vail, in return. "Pleasant voyage to you."

The brigantine was now well to windward, and, as the pipes of the frigate rang out preparatory to the order to fill her maintop-sail, the top-sail of the former, which had been lowered in compliment to the larger ship, was hoisted again, her top-gallant-sail was let fall and sheeted home and, laying as near the wind as she would go, she began to leave her huge antagonist rapidly. Captain Ray and his mate began to congratulate themselves upon a neat escape, especially as they now saw the *Medusa*, with her maintop-sail filled, bowling off before the wind at a tremendous rate which promised to run her out of sight before another hour.

They calculated without their host, however, for, before the distance between the two vessels had increased to one third of a mile, they beheld her thrown up into the wind again, and heard the report of one of her bow guns, while a yellow and green flag was immediately displayed in her weather main-rigging.

"By heavens! Captain Ray," exclaimed his mate, who had been diligently searching through the lead-covered book, "I can't find that flag here at all!"

Captain Ray's face, usually pale, became ghastly, and he stamped once with his right foot upon the deck as if he would have driven that foot through the stout plank. The mate's countenance, too, seemed to catch the hue of his commander's by contagion, and he gazed with questioning eyes upon him.

"*The private signal!*!" muttered Captain Ray. That was all he said, but the insignificant-looking little sentence seemed to contain a world of meaning which struck the two pirates dumb. The next instant a stunning report startled their very souls, and the iron hail of the frigate's whole larboard broadside came rattling in thunder about their ears.

To explain this mysterious occurrence, so inconsistent with the friendly attitude of the frigate a few short moments before, we must return to that vessel's decks for a brief space. As the maintop-sail of the *Medusa* was filled and she began rapidly to gain headway on her former course, the master, who had been standing aft of the mizzen shrouds gazing intently at the brigantine, suddenly turned and went hastily up to Lieutenant Vail who was replacing the frigate's signal-book in its case.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the master, touching his cap, "but, upon my soul, I don't believe that's the dispatch brig *Spite* at all!"

"Eh! what?" exclaimed the executive officer, letting the signal-book fall to the deck in his sudden surprise. "What's that you say?"

"I say I don't believe that is the *Spite* at all," repeated the master.

The fall of the book had attracted the attention of Sir Guy, and moreover he had heard the repetition of the strange assertion of the master. Hurrying over in a most undignified and gouty manner he also demanded what that officer had said.

The master repeated the words very impressively.

"The fact is," he continued, "I was out on the West India Station about five years ago and took a short cruise in the *Spite* when she was first built. That vessel looks something like her, but she was a full-rigged brig and this one is only a brigantine!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated gouty Sir Guy, his red face growing perfectly crimson, as he and his executive officer gazed at each other in blank surprise. "You don't mean to say that this is a trick? Lay the ship to, Mr. Vail!" he continued suddenly, recovering himself a little. "Lay the ship to, and show the private signal. If he don't answer it at once, blow the rascal out of the water!"

The boatswain's pipes rang out at once, summoning the frigate's crew to quarters; the captain's orders were obeyed with the result we have already seen. There was no doubt now in the minds of the officers of the *Medusa*, that they had been handsomely tricked, for the brigantine did not reply to the private signal, and held on her course without a reply of any sort, even setting studding-sails wherever they could be made available. She was directly to windward, and as the first broadside had not crippled her, owing to the hurry of its discharge, she was rapidly increasing her distance. A stern chase is a long chase, especially when it has to be pursued dead to windward. The brigantine's rig, also, enabled her to hug the wind closer than the square-rigged frigate, and, therefore, after the first discharge, the guns of the *Medusa* were no more used, every effort of her officers and crew being directed to crowding on all the sail she would stagger under, in order to close with the audacious stranger.

On board the *Rayo-centella*, on the contrary, every exertion was made to escape. When the frigate fairly gathered headway in pursuit, the brigantine had gained a full mile from her, and, before long, it was evident that, as she sailed so much nearer the wind, she was gradually but surely increasing that distance. The spirits of Captain Ray and his mate rose as they became confident of this fact, and they were in the act of congratulating themselves on their certainty of escape, when suddenly a new and terrible misfortune unexpectedly befell them.

When the frigate had fired her broadside, it had been sup-

posed by the pirates that the iron hail had passed them harmlessly ; but, unfortunately, one shot had struck the foremast, just below the heel of the topmast, in such a situation, that, though it had wounded the lower-mast severely, it had escaped their observation. They had, of course, set every available stitch of canvas when they found they were discovered, and this enormous strain upon the wounded mast brought about a catastrophe which was fatal to their hopes. Just as they had exchanged their congratulations, an ominous crackling sound caused them simultaneously to cast their eyes aloft, and there they beheld a sight that chilled their very hearts. Swaying slowly forward, as though resisting its fate, the whole of the lofty mast above the wound was tottering to its fall, and, scarcely had they realized the fearful fact, when, with a crash that was heard distinctly on board their pursuer, the towering fabric, with all its hamper of yards, and sails, and rigging, came thundering down, in melancholy ruin, over the starboard bow.

If their hope of escape had ever been worth any thing, this would have annihilated it. They did not even attempt to clear away the wreck, for, long before they could have completed the task—even if they could have continued their flight subsequently—the frigate would have been upon them. Indeed, a very few moments sufficed to set all doubt at rest on this subject. Hand over hand the *Medusa* gained upon them now, and, shortly, the thunder of her guns, as she fired them steadily and regularly by divisions, woke the knell of their fate. Ranging up on the brig's weather-quarter, Sir Guy backed his maintop-sail again, and coolly proceeded to fire at the now helpless pirate, until he had brought down her mainmast, wounded or killed more than half of her crew, and left her a forlorn wreck upon the heaving water, like to an eagle, whose pinions have been broken by the hunter, and who sinks upon the bosom of the wave to die, amid its turbulence, as becomes a king.

Finding that all resistance had ceased—the pirates never fired a single gun at her antagonist—Sir Guy had ordered both cutters to be lowered and manned ; this done, he commanded his executive officer to go on board the prize and take possession of her. When Lieutenant Vail reached her

deck, he found the mate alone to receive him, Captain Ray having descended to the cabin to communicate the melancholy intelligence of their capture to Ella. Accordingly, Lieutenant Vail, feeling that very little consideration was due to a conquered pirate, entered the cabin without ceremony, but having entered, he there beheld a spectacle which made him doubt whether he had not been too hasty.

Overcome by agitation and dismay, Ella reclined half-swooning in her brother's arms, and he, with flashing eye and compressed lip, glared angrily at the intruder, as if to demand the reason of his hasty entrance. For a moment the two men gazed wrathfully upon each other, but suddenly and simultaneously an extraordinary change came into the angry look; and surprise, wonder, and even consternation usurped its place.

"I can not be mistaken!" said the lieutenant, stepping hastily forward. "You are—"

"I am Oscar Dale, Lewis," interrupted the pirate, in a tone, the bitterness of which was a terrible exponent of his feelings. "I am sorry that I can not offer my younger brother a happier welcome."

"Great God! to find you thus after all these years!" exclaimed the naval officer, who was, in truth, none other than Lewis Dale, the miser's younger son. "What, then, is this life I find you engaged in?"

"I am a pirate, Lewis," answered the elder brother, coolly, while his sister shrank from his arms in horror, as she heard this, the confirmation of her worst fears. "Nothing less than a pirate, and, therefore, your lawful prisoner."

"Lewis, Lewis!" shrieked Ella, falling on her knees at his feet. "Save him! save him! He is desperate now; but, believe me, he is not so fearfully wicked as he would have you believe."

"And who are you, madam?" asked the naval officer, in profound astonishment, as he gazed at her tearful face. "You seem to know me—"

"I am your sister Ella!" she answered, interrupting him instantly. "Do you not know me?"

"Ella!" exclaimed Lewis, raising her from the deck, and clasping her closely in his arms. "This is terrible!"

For some minutes an emotion too deep for words imposed silence on the actors in this strange scene, but then a series of eager questions and no less eager answers, explained in some degree, the chance that had brought them together. The reader is already acquainted with the reasons for Ella's appearance on board her elder brother's ship, and a few words will render clear the story of Lewis Dale, as he hurriedly told it to them.

Martin Dale and his son Lewis never had shown much affection for each other, and, after certain terrible occurrences, which will ere long be related, they became more estranged than ever. Lewis was fiery and passionate in his disposition and the cold, sneering manner of the old man was a daily irritation to his sensitive nature. When the knowledge first came to the old man that his daughter loved a man who had wronged him, he chose to believe that Lewis had long known and concealed this intrigue, as he termed it, from him, and that his youngest son was engaged in fostering his sister's love for the Spaniard, in order to further his own designs. One day he rashly taunted the young man with this evil purpose, and, in a more than usually bitter and sneering manner, told him that he knew he was endeavoring to lead Ella to forget her duty, in order that he, Martin, should discard her, and thus leave him sole heir to the estate. The proud youth resented these words with indignation, the quarrel grew fiercer and more bitter, and, at last, in a fit of ungovernable rage, Lewis struck his father to the floor, and rushed from his presence never more to behold him. We know that, shortly after this, Ella eloped with her lover, and the old man was left indeed desolate.

Lewis, who had a small property in England, inherited from his mother, embarked for that country at once, and, on his arrival there, sold the property, changed his name, and entered the naval service as a master's mate. Within the same year he married the daughter of a retired captain in the navy, who had some influence through his family, and, by exerting this, obtained for his son-in-law his commission as a lieutenant. Of this union, the youth, Lawrence Vail, whom we have seen as Sea Weed's lover, was the only fruit, and the lieutenant, having had the good fortune to attract the notice

of the Admiralty by many acts, was rapidly advanced in his profession. When he last returned to England, he was enabled to command the influence by which his son obtained the position of secretary to the colonial governor. Lewis's wife had been dead some years, and he was now making his final cruise as a lieutenant, expecting to receive his commission as captain at the first vacancy

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEIRS REACH THEIR HOME AND THE WILL IS EXECUTED.

COR.—These are indeed most unexpected news!

I did not think he had been so implacable!

VIL.—His was a nature hard as knotted oak

And as unbending.—THE COMIC TRAGEDY.

THE lieutenant's explanation, which was rapidly given, did not occupy many minutes, but, in the mean time, the frigate had ranged alongside, and loud calls for the officer were heard on deck. Warning his newly-found relatives to remain quiet, he went on deck, and began to superintend the clearing away of the wreck and securing the prisoners. This accomplished, he repaired on board the frigate, and having reported to Sir Guy, requested an interview with that officer. This being granted, he informed the captain of his strange encounter with his brother and sister on board the *Rayo-centella*, and requested that Ella, at least, might be treated with the courtesy due to her embarrassing position. Sir Guy was immensely pleased with the romance of the affair, and offered at once to give up part of his own cabin to her, and, sending for the carpenter, immediately ordered him to put up a partition which would insure the privacy of her stateroom. As for Oscar, he could not take the responsibility of treating him in any other manner than as a prisoner, but would do all in his power to render his captivity as easy as possible.

Thanking Sir Guy for his kindness, the lieutenant again went on board the brig to inform his relatives of what he had done. Ella was very grateful, and Oscar perfectly satisfied,

saying that this kindness was more than he could have expected. The prisoners were shortly afterwards transferred to the frigate, Oscar being placed in charge of the master-at-arms, and Ella very kindly received by Sir Guy himself.

A detail from the *Medusa's* crew were then placed on board the brig to rig jury-masts upon her. With the help of her old spars this was accomplished in the course of the night and following day. The two vessels then set sail in company, the frigate reducing her canvas to accommodate her speed to that of the dismasted prize, though, as the wind was fair, they both made very respectable headway. Sir Guy determined on proceeding at once to New York with his prize. His cruise had no special object at this time, and though he had intended to run to the West Indies and communicate with the fleet there, that design was of no importance compared with the necessity of delivering up his prisoners to justice as speedily as possible. Accordingly their course was shaped for that port, and with a leading wind and a calm sea, they bounded merrily over the blue water, though many hearts in their dark hulls were oppressed with gloom.

Some days before the voyage ended, Sir Guy caused Oscar to be brought before him, and questioned the pirate chief considerately in regard to his course, wishing for Ellen's sake (in whom he had become much interested) to find some mitigating circumstance upon which he might find an excuse for interfering in his behalf. There was little hope; Oscar Dale was very reticent on the subject of the causes which impelled him to adopt the lawless life he had lately led, but he stated that he had at first been acting under a commission issued by the crown, authorizing a private company, at the head of which was the Earl of Bellamont, to cruise against pirates in the eastern seas. These voyages not proving profitable he had turned pirate himself, the only extenuating circumstance being that he had attacked vessels of the Spanish nation alone—a nation odious to Englishmen ever since the armada.

Sir Guy had little consolation to give him, but hoped that his personal influence with the Earl of Bellamont might be of some effect in mitigating that nobleman's anger at the unwar-rantable use of his commission. He promised to exert that influence, and dismissed Oscar with a feeling nearer akin to

hope than the latter had felt since his capture. The intercourse between the brothers was circumscribed by the circumstances of the case, but Lewis did every thing in his power to make Oscar feel his captivity lightly, and his buoyant nature found a thousand reasons for thinking that Sir Guy's influence would not be extended in vain. Ella herself began to entertain hope, and her health improved in consequence. Sir Guy's manner was fatherly kindness itself, and Ella was as happy as the situation allowed her to be.

Two weeks rapidly passed away, and on the morning of the fifteenth day the highlands of the Navesink were in sight from the masthead. The same afternoon the two vessels passed the Narrows, and late at night came to anchor off the lower battery in the harbor of New York. The next morning the authorities were informed of that which had occurred, and during the day the prisoners were transferred from the frigate to the jail in the fort which stood on the spot now known as the battery.

When Sir Guy obtained an interview with the governor he lost no time in doing as he had promised, by saying all he could in favor of his captive. The facts that the brig had made no resistance, and that the piracy of which her crew had been guilty had only been directed against the Spaniards, who were considered by Englishmen as their natural enemies, were dwelt upon with much vigor and shrewdness, but an unexpected obstacle presented itself at the outset. The Earl of Bellamont was much chagrined that his name should be used as a cloak for the evil deeds of the pirate, and some time previously he had placed the matter outside of his own jurisdiction by referring the whole subject to Parliament. He was therefore under the necessity of sending Oscar to England to take his trial, and had determined to take no steps which would involve him further in the matter. With this information Sir Guy was forced to return to Helen and Lewis, who had been, by this time, informed of their father's death.

It was with heavy hearts, therefore, that the brother and sister once more stepped upon the soil of their native city, and when they entered the forlorn old house, its aspect seemed, indeed, a fitting culmination to so much woe and misery. **Messrs. Barrel and Martin**, the executors, were much pleased.

nevertheless, at the strange return of the miser's children, as it would relieve them of a responsibility they had found burdensome, and they lost no time in making the house as comfortable as possible for Ellen.

It was with mingled feelings of astonishment and anger that Lewis first heard from his son the story of his love. He plainly told him that he had other views for him, but when Lawrence informed the Earl of his father's opposition, the governor kindly offered to use his influence with the lieutenant, and was entirely successful. The truth was, that Sea Weed had rendered herself dear to all the household of which she was now an honored member, and the lieutenant, having given his consent to the marriage, was soon as much fascinated by her as the others had been, and welcomed her proudly as his daughter for her own sake. About a fortnight after the arrival of the frigate the will was read to the children of old Martin, Oscar being present, under a guard, by permission of the Earl. The effect of the anathema upon him contained therein, though there had been little love or respect between him and his father, was fearful in the extreme. From the moment he heard it his health visibly gave way; indeed, he fainted when it was read, and was removed to the fort without hearing the concluding portions of the document. He appeared to attach a secret importance to it, the reason of which he would not disclose, and which was not warranted, apparently, by that which every one supposed to be the mere expression of an unnatural vindictiveness on the part of his dead father.

Lewis received the tidings of his small legacy very philosophically, stating that he had parted on such terms with his father as to preclude the possibility of receiving any thing from his parent save a mere recognition.

Ella received the tidings of her good fortune—if such it could be called—with mingled feelings of sorrow and astonishment; sorrow that her brothers were disinherited, and surprise that her father had not only forgiven her, but appeared to desire her forgiveness in return. Something of indignation, too, at what she considered the injustice of depriving her brothers of all share in the large inheritance prompted her to demand of the lawyers at once, if she was

absolutely debarred from dividing the estate with them. She was informed that nothing in the will enforced any penalty for such a course, but it was the evident wish of the testator that she should not do so, and the pointed allusion to the mysterious document accompanying the will, plainly pointed to the fact that in its solution she would find ample reason for complying with his last desire.

Ella was much astonished at this singular cryptogram, and at once affirmed that she knew nothing of its meaning, nor had she ever heard of the secret of which her father seemed to have thought she was fully informed. Nothing remained, then, but to endeavor to discover its meaning, and after some deliberation it was entrusted to Lawrence Vail (or rather Dale as we must now call him) he having, in his capacity of librarian to the Earl, had some experience in translating cipher writing—an art which was even more necessary in the days of which we write than now.

Some weeks now elapsed, and the frigate was almost ready to sail with the prisoners for England, when events, which had been entirely unforeseen, and were of a most important nature, contributed to bring about a catastrophe as unexpected as it was novel. Oscar had been gradually growing worse since the reading of the will, and Ella, by permission of the Earl, had closely attended him. The hospital of the fort to which he had been removed was but a small room, and several other patients were also accommodated there. Among these the mate of the *Rayo-centella*, who had been wounded in the engagement with the frigate, occupied a bed at a short distance from that of Oscar, so closely placed that all which passed at the latter's bed could be heard by the wounded man.

One morning Ella was attending to some directions which the surgeon was explaining to her, when the doctor casually addressed her by her married name as Signora Da Costa. The mate, who had been reading, dropped the book as though it had burned him, and turning suddenly on his pillow, inquired in an agitated voice:

"Is your name, indeed, Da Costa?"

"It was the name of my husband, sir, and, of course, mine," she replied, somewhat surprised.

The mate made no other remark, but gazed at her with an expression that had something of terror in it.

"Why do you ask?" inquired Ella, after a pause.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he replied in evident confusion, and turning away. "The name was familiar to me, that is all."

Nothing further transpired at the time, but the next day, while Oscar was sleeping, Ella was again surprised at hearing herself called by the mate, who earnestly requested her to come to his bed-side. She did so, with a feeling akin to wonder, and was still more astonished at his first inquiry:

"Will you tell me who your husband was, and where he lived?"

Though the question was certainly a singular one under the circumstances, Ella had no reason for concealment, and at once replied,

"His name was Alphonse Da Costa, and his family resided in the Havana."

"When and how did you lose him?" he next asked, with an eagerness that was positively appalling. "Was he not killed in endeavoring to escape from Cuba at the time of the Nola insurrection?"

"It is true, indeed," answered Ella, agitated both by the abruptness of this reference to her old-time griefs and the earnestness of the man's manner. "I did not know how he died, but he must have been slain, or he would have returned to me. Oh! do you know aught of his strange disappearance? Tell me, quickly!"

"Hush, hush!" cautioned the mate, casting a meaning glance at her sleeping brother. "Do not speak so loud. Who was the companion of his flight?"

"His partner, an Englishman by the name of Foster," she replied, speaking in a whisper. "Tell me quickly what you know of this—for I see you *do* know all."

"I thought so, I feared so!" muttered the mate, not heeding her agonized appeal, and evidently deeply moved. "This is horrible—most horrible!"

"What is horrible?" demanded Ella, almost frenzied. "Tell me, oh, tell me! what is this mystery?"

"Hush! not now, there is no opportunity," he answered,

casting upon her a look of mingled fear and compassion. "Your brother is waking. Procure me paper and writing materials, and I will write all that I know. You should be made acquainted with it as soon as possible."

He positively refused to say more, and Ella was forced to comply with his conditions. For several days thereafter he was occupied, each day as long as his strength would permit, in writing what seemed to be a continued narrative. The surgeon was alarmed at the effect this exertion seemed to have upon him, but the mate persisted, despite the doctor's warnings, in his task. At last it was finished, and he then requested that a magistrate and several witnesses might be summoned in order that he could sign the document in their presence, and swear to its truth. His request was complied with, and when he had solemnly made oath to the truth of every thing contained therein, he signed the paper and handed it to Ella.

"Do not read this until I am dead, Signora?" he said, in an impressive tone. "*I shall not make you wait long.*"

Before the next morning he was cold in death.

It was with a feeling of dread that Ella, shortly after the news of his death was brought to her, proceeded to open the paper which she believed would unfold the mystery of her beloved husband's death. It was something more than the feeling which would be natural in perusing the mere detail of a death to which time had taught her to be resigned. She felt, indeed, that she should find in the document much that would be still more dreadful to herself, and though she could not possibly account for the presentiment, it was, nevertheless, true, even beyond her wildest conjecture. The contents of the paper were, in brief, as contained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE PIRATE'S STORY.

"Conspiracies no sooner should be formed
Than execrated."—*Cato: a Tragedy.*—ADDISON.

"FOR many years my mind has been harrassed, and I have become perfectly reckless under the weight of a terrible secret which I ought no longer to conceal. I am impelled to its disclosure now, by two considerations, the most powerful known to humanity; the first being the fact that I am about to die, and the second that I have lately, and providentially, come in contact with the person who has been most injured by the occurrences I am about to relate. That which is hereinafter written, I most solemnly declare to be true, in every particular, as I hope to be forgiven for my many sins.

"My real name is William Lyndall, and I am the only son of a wealthy freeholder in Leicestershire. I was brought up religiously, and received an education commensurate to my father's means and standing; but even in my boyhood I was impatient of control and reckless of all the ties of duty or gratitude. I shall not dwell upon the causes which led to my banishment from my home; suffice it to say, that I went on from bad to worse, until, at last, I committed a minor offense against the laws which would have entailed disgrace upon my family had I been brought to trial.

"Though fearfully incensed—more at the fear of dishonor resting on his ancestral name than at my guilt—my father assisted my escape, and gave me ample means, but commanded me never more to set foot within his threshold. I was but a younger son, and knew that this fiat was irrevocable; and I have never seen one of my kindred since. I went to France, to Germany, to Spain, and finally to Cuba. I had been engaged, during my wanderings, in every thing that was lawless, though not actually felonious, and, at last, in the slave trade, which rendered me ripe for any adventure, however desperate. In the Havana, more than fifteen years ago, I first met

Captain Ray, whom I have lately known as Oscar Dale. He was then engaged in the slave-trade himself, and found me a willing tool for his purposes. I have remained with him in various capacities ever since.

"We made several voyages together in a fine, swift-sailing schooner which he owned, and at the end of two years I was his second-mate, which position I have continued to hold under him, until he killed his first-officer, on board the last Spanish vessel we captured, and from which we took the Signora Da Costa. At the time I have mentioned, we were lying in the harbor of the Havana, and one evening Captain Ray came to me in my cabin.

"'Lyndall,' said he, (he knew my real name perfectly well, though few others did,) 'do you feel inclined to undertake a risky piece of work in order to make a good thing of it?'

"'You ought to know me pretty well by this time, captain,' said I; 'it's not the risk to myself that will stop me.'

"'Very good,' said he. 'The fact is, old Manuel Ferrara—the Spanish Agent, as they call him, because he manages the crown plantations—wants me to come on shore and see him to-night, and to bring with me some smart fellow who is not afraid of a little danger.'

"'Do you know what the business is?' I asked.

"'I have an idea,' he answered, 'but I don't know anything positive. The best way is to see him, and then, if we don't like it, we can back out.'

"'Very well, I'm ready,' I replied, and the conversation ended.

"That evening, as soon as it was dark, we went ashore in the small-boat and made the best of our way to Don Manuel's house, which was at the extremity of the city, on a road which was a continuation of the Calle Real. We found him waiting for us, and he seemed very glad to see us. He was a little, dried-up, wizened man, scarcely five feet high, and looked more like a baboon than a human being. I was actually startled when I saw him first, and before I left him I had cause to be still more afraid of him. Such a fiendish little devil it has never been my lot to see, before or since, and I have seen all sorts of villains.

"'Well, my friends,' said he, in Spanish, (of course the

whole conversation was conducted in that tongue; 'you are punctual. It speaks well for your business qualifications. We are sadly at a loss for real business men nowadays.'

"' And what is the particular business you want us for now, Dcn Manuel ?' asked the captain, as we took our seats.

"' Hush ! hush !' exclaimed the Don, with an expressive gesture. ' Wait until these servants are out of the way.'

" As he spoke, two of his men entered, bearing wine and refreshments, which they placed on the table.

"' Andreas,' said the Don, addressing one of them, ' I shall not need either you or Tomas to-night. You can have a holiday. Go and enjoy yourselves, my children.'

" Ten minutes after he gave the permission, during which we discussed ordinary topics, the two men were heard departing. When their footsteps had died away, the manner of our host, which had been gay and debonair, underwent an extraordinary change. Springing up, he closed the jalousies of the veranda, and even the blinds of the windows, though the night was uncommonly warm, and, having locked the door, returned toward the table at which we were sitting. I happened to look at him as he advanced, and, upon my life, I nearly fell over backward ! He resembled a monkey when I first saw him, but now the expression of his face made me think of the grinning devils which are looking over St. Martin's shoulder in the altar-piece of the church of the Seven Saints at Rio. As will be seen, before I have finished, the comparison was not inapt. He sat down, and, without preliminary words, thus introduced the business for which he had summoned us :

"' Captain Ray, my friend, I am well aware that you have long sailed so close to the wind, as you sailors call it, with your virtue and morality, that you care very little *what* you do as long as you see your gain in it. Now if your friend here is a man of your own stamp, and you can vouch for him, it won't take ten minutes to finish our conversation.'

"' I'll back him to do any thing *I* do,' said the captain, simply, and turning to me, ' eh, Will ?'

"' Certainly,' said I, looking at the Don. ' If the devil wants you to do any thing that I can help you in, I'll do it.'

"' Well, then,' said the Don, drawing his chair closer, ' listen

attentively. The fact is that there is an extensive conspiracy in the island, and its organization is already so far advanced that it is on the eve of an explosion. This much we—that is to say, the Government—know, but we want more. We want actual proof against one or two of the leaders, and *then* we shall be able to deal with the whole affair easily. Now, I can put you in the way of becoming acquainted with one who *I* think is the chief, or, at least, very close to the head, of the conspiracy. It will be your business to worm yourself into his confidence, and, once having done so, offer to aid his plans with your schooner, or your sword, or any thing else you have to give him. He will then believe; perhaps initiate you into his society—for there *is* a secret society connected with it, we are certain—and you will be able to find out, *and furnish us*, all the information we want.'

"‘In a word,’ said Captain Ray, coolly, as he paused, ‘you wish us to become Government spies?’

“‘A harsh word, captain,’ said the little fiend, with a grin, ‘but—yes—that *is* the best way to put it.’

“‘And what security shall we have,’ asked the captain, ‘that, when we have done all your dirty work, you won’t include us in the same indictment with the conspirators, and cut off *our* heads too?’

“In an instant Don Manuel turned deadly pale, and looked at the captain in real alarm. It was clear that the little devil had meditated just such a treachery, but found himself baffled at the outset. He was prepared, nevertheless, and recovering himself almost immediately, he laughed sardonically.

“‘Always clear-headed, my dear captain!’ he exclaimed. ‘As sharp and as cool as ever! Well, well, I think I can remove your scruples entirely.’

“With these words he drew from a breast-pocket a long, official-looking package, and, after some search among its contents, extracted a paper which he handed to Captain Ray without speaking. This proved to be a full and complete ‘protection of police,’ as it was technically called, signed by the Capitan-General, and empowering the holder to do almost any thing he pleased against the *nominal* laws as long as he did it ‘in the secret service of the Government.’ The place

for the name was blank, and, as we had not only heard of these mysterious documents before, but had seen something of their working, we knew at once that we had nothing to fear if we were furnished with this protection. It had probably been Don Manuel's intention to withhold these precious papers from us, and sacrifice us after we had done our work ; but the captain was too sharp for him.

" ' If you have got another one of these for Lyndall,' said the captain, after he had read it, ' and will fill in our names and hand them over at once, you may consider us your men.'

The Don took out another similar paper from the packet, went over to a small desk that stood in a corner, wrote our names in the proper places, and, returning, handed the documents to us without a word.

" ' I need hardly advise you,' said he, after a pause, ' that, if those papers happen to be seen about you, by those you are going to visit, your lives won't be worth a maravedi.'

" ' If they see them,' answered the captain, with a laugh, ' they are welcome to our lives ; and now, Don Manuel, what are we to make by this transaction ?'

A long conversation now ensued, during which the terms which the Government offered for the information it wanted were discussed and finally accepted by us. The method by which we were to become acquainted with the chief conspirator was then stated. This was merely by being introduced to him—he was a certain Don Ferdinand di Nola, a great merchant at the Havana—by Don Manuel, as the owners of the schooner, who wanted to get a freight, or a voyage, for their vessel, and who were not particular what kind of a voyage it was. This introduction was to be performed the next day, and we were to begin our nefarious work at once. All this having been agreed to, we supposed the interview ended, and began to make preparations for departure.

" ' Hold, gentlemen,' exclaimed Don Manuel, motioning us to our seats again. ' The Government business is now finished, but I have something to propose to you on my own account.'

We seated ourselves with looks of inquiry, and he at once opened the matter to us.

" ' You have heard of the firm of Da Costa & Foster, on the Calle Esperanza ?' he asked.

“The captain replied in the affirmative.

“‘To tell you the plain truth,’ said the Don, after a brief pause, during which his hideous features worked convulsively, to tell you the truth, Da Costa is my mortal enemy. He has always opposed me in every scheme that promised great success to *me*, and I have made up my mind—*to ruin him!*”

“It is impossible to describe the accent and expression with which this hideous little fiend thus announced his intention of destroying an honorable gentleman, who, probably, had only opposed him when the schemes he spoke of were nefarious and unmercantile. It was none of our business, however. Honor and we had long since parted company, and if we could make ‘a good thing’ out of the Don’s malevolent design, why—so much the better for us !

“‘How do you propose to accomplish this?’ inquired my commander.

“‘With your help it is easy,’ replied the Don. ‘I shall either inveigle him to join the conspiracy, or—*make it appear that he has done so!*’ and the wretch grinned significantly.

“‘Come, come, Don,’ exclaimed Captain Ray, hastily, ‘we don’t mind spying out the doings of *real* traitors—the very fact that the Government employs us takes away part of the meanness of the business; but to bear false witness against a man that never injured us—’

“‘But I’ll make it worth your while, captain,’ interrupted the agent, eagerly. ‘On my word, I’ll double the pay the Government gives you if you’ll manage to include Alphonse Da Costa’s name in the report !’

“‘Well,’ said the captain, rising from his chair, in which action I hastened to follow his example, ‘I’ll think it over, Don Manuel, and give you an answer to-morrow or next day.’

“This was the conclusion of this important conversation, and we now took our leave of the agent, with the understanding that we were to meet him on the morrow. As we proceeded to our boat, Captain Ray gave expression to his thoughts as follows :

“‘A pretty business we have embarked in, Will,’ said he. ‘I give you my word I never would have listened to him if I hadn’t a hope of including him in the net with these poor devils whom he hopes to ruin.’

"The introduction to Don Ferdinand di Nola took place the next day, as arranged, and before a fortnight had elapsed, Captain Ray was completely in his confidence. The Don was a man of excellent family, high standing, both as a merchant and as a gentleman, and possessed a great influence among all classes. The secret of his conspiracy was that he was greatly dissatisfied with the administration of the Capitan-General then in power, and its aim was merely to induce the crown to recall that individual and replace him with a better man. As for personal aggrandizement, Don Ferdinand never thought of it. I was well satisfied, when I had obtained a full knowledge of all his designs—which I did, at last—that his only object was to relieve his countrymen on the island from a tyrannical misrule which was ruining them. He never intended any thing against the authority of the Spanish crown, and a more innocent plot never was hatched among the Cubans.

"Ostensibly, of course, our intercourse with Don Ferdinand had been, at first to obtain a freight for the schooner; but, at the end of the fortnight I have mentioned, Captain Ray had obtained such an ascendancy over him, that no more was said about cargoes, and Don Ferdinand had accepted both of us as recruits to the 'Holy Cause,' as he called his plot. We were duly initiated into the secret society, and the captain had his report nearly ready to deliver to the authorities. All that Don Manuel now required was to obtain evidence of Da Costa's complicity, and I was deputed to this task.

"Villain as I was, and I do not seek to extenuate my baseness, I set about this work with a heavy heart. I knew Da Costa well, as well as a man in my station of life could know one in his, and I had never heard, or seen, any thing but good of him. His brother merchants respected and trusted him, his friends and relations loved him, and the poor blessed him. Nevertheless, I went to work, deliberately, to ruin him, merely for gain, and no excuse is possible for such treachery. May Heaven forgive me; I can not forgive myself!

"My first plan was to take advantage of the freedom of intercourse which Da Costa, though we were so differently situated in life, kindly granted me, to tempt him to join the conspiracy in reality. He was proof against the temptation

In every way. Though he fully acknowledged that what I told him about the tyranny of the Capitan-General and the wrongs of the Cubans, was true, yet he frankly replied that he believed that the government was too strong to be attacked either openly or secretly. Nothing but disaster, he said, could result to those who should attempt to subvert the existing order of things in any other way than through respectful petitions to the throne, and even these would be dangerous, for, if they did not succeed, those who signed them would become marks for the malevolence of the Capitan-General, who would, of course, be stronger than ever. Finally, he said, his duty to his family forbade him from meddling with politics in any manner whatever.

"Having thus failed in connecting him with the plot by his own choice, I concocted another scheme. I had been speaking to him on several occasions about a freight for the schooner, and one evening I entered his office, suddenly, and asked him to do me the favor of walking to Don Ferdinand di Nola's house, with whom, I told him, I thought an arrangement could be made for a large lot of tobacco that he had, and, if so, this contract would give the schooner a cargo, as Don Ferdinand had promised to ship it by us if he bought it.

"As I had never told him who was at the head of the conspiracy I had hinted at, this plausible story imposed on him completely, and, as he was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, he consented to go at once, because he thought it would do me a favor. Conversing pleasantly on ordinary topics, we passed rapidly along the now nearly deserted streets at the waterside, and soon stood in front of a tall, gloomy-looking building, which Signor Da Costa knew to be one of Don Ferdinand's warehouses.

"'I thought you said we were to go to his house?' he asked me in surprise.

"'Oh, no,' I answered coolly, 'you're mistaken. He is waiting here for us,' and, without giving him time to reflect, I pushed open a small door in one corner, and ushered him into a covered alley-way that led to the offices in the rear. He followed me without suspicion, and, in a few seconds, we reached another door, before which stood a man, to whom I hurriedly whispered a pass-word. The man drew back, and,

motioning him to precede me, I followed him through the portal, and closed it after me.

"The scene that now presented itself must have astonished while it bewildered him. A long, narrow room, which had been a ware-room for tobacco, with rough, whitewashed walls, and traversed overhead by large, unpainted beams, was dimly lighted by a score of smoking lamps, placed irregularly around it. At the further end, a raised platform, probably constructed of boxes, covered with a black cloth, supported a table and two chairs also draped with the same somber material. In front of this platform, on the floor itself, stood another table, behind which two more chairs were placed, but these were without covering of any description. Around the room were scattered rough chairs, rude benches, boxes, and whatever else might serve for seats.

"Such was the room and its furniture, but the living occupants were even more singular and striking in appearance, and constituted the real attraction of the somber scene. On the black platform at the end of the room, sat two men, clad in long, flowing robes, and wearing close masks, which permitted only the flashing glances of their eyes to be seen. At the lower table were two other men, but these, though robed, were not masked. On both tables writing materials were laid, and it was plain that these four were the officers of the meeting. Distributed throughout the rest of the apartment, apparently preserving no order in their arrangement, and conversing with each other in low whispers, were nearly a hundred other persons, all more or less disguised, but evidently not for the purpose of concealing themselves from each other.

"The noise occasioned by our entrance attracted the attention of the whole assembly. Every eye was turned in our direction, and, simultaneously, every individual produced a mask similar to those worn by the individuals on the black platform. Undoubtedly they had at once discovered a new face in that of my companion, and the effect of the sudden masking of the whole assemblage was striking in the extreme.

"Da Costa instantly perceived the trick that had been put upon him. Although he knew nothing positively, he felt he was

in the presence of that secret society which I had vainly tempted him to join. Casting one reproachful glance upon me, but without speaking a word, he turned, and would have passed out at the door by which we had entered. It was too late, however, for, during the brief interval which had been occupied by his surprise, two masked men had taken their stations between him and the door, and now stood, motionless and silent, but presenting at his breast the points of their naked swords.

"At this moment the sound of three strokes upon a small bell was heard, and in an instant every person in the assembly, but the sentinels at the door and ourselves, sat down with their faces toward the platform. In the midst of the profound silence which ensued, a stern voice, issuing from behind one of the masks on the platform, pronounced the following words:

"'Brothers, let the candidate approach.'

The men with the drawn swords instantly seized Da Costa's arms and conducted him to a place in front of the lower table. Arrived here, he was addressed as follows, by one of the men seated behind this table:

"'What is thy name?'

"'Alphonse Da Costa.'

"'What is thy purpose in coming hither?'

The time had now arrived when my prisoner, (for such, in reality, he was,) could speak, and he was not slow to take advantage of it.

"'I have been decoyed here by a pretended friend. I did not know that I was coming to a meeting such as this, and I have no idea why he brought me here.'

A low, threatening murmur rose throughout the room.

"'Do you not know the object of this meeting?' was the next question.

"'I may guess it,' answered Da Costa; 'indeed, I think I know it; but I have no sympathy with it, and do not desire, or intend, to join the movement, if I am right.'

"'How is this, brother?' said the secretary, turning to me. 'Why have you brought this man here if you were not sure of his fitness and his willingness to join the Holy Cause?'

The threatening murmur grew louder, and I began to fear

that I had made a false step. Boldness alone would save me, however, and of that I had plenty.

"Worthy brother," I answered, promptly, "I believe him to be eminently fitted for affiliation in the Holy Cause. I have sounded him on various occasions and found that he considered our general views right and just. There was, on his part, some natural hesitation as to engaging in doubtful enterprises, but the importance of obtaining his coöperation, inasmuch as he possesses influence and standing in the community, was so great that I determined to take the bold step of bringing him hither that he might see our power and hear the words of truth which would resolve his doubts."

"Is this true?" asked the secretary, addressing Da Costa.

"In part, it is," answered the latter. "I have conversed with him many times on the topics to which I suppose he refers, and I have freely acknowledged to him that I would be very glad to see a change where a change has long been desirable, but I never gave him reason to suppose that I would join any unlawful organization, or commit any unlawful act, to effect it."

The murmur rose almost to a cry, but at the sound of the little bell every thing was perfectly still again.

After a brief pause both the secretaries rose and ascended the platform. A long, whispered consultation, between the four officers of the assembly, followed, and when it ended the secretaries returned to their places.

"Alphonse Da Costa," asked he who had previously addressed us, "are you willing to join this association?"

"I am not, and never shall be!" answered Da Costa, firmly. "I believe I understand your objects, and I approve of them, but I do not approve of the means by which you propose to attain them."

"Do you know what you risk by this answer?"

"I, at least, do not fear that risk, whatever it may be," answered Da Costa, proudly. "Listen to me, gentlemen," he added, suddenly, turning so that his voice could be plainly heard throughout the room; "I have been brought here by a fraud and against my will. I never would have attempted to penetrate your mystery of my own accord. I do not recognize one of you, but I do not doubt there are many here

who know me in the open light of day. If so, I confidently ask if any one of you ever knew me to do a dishonorable or treacherous act, or to break my word? Let me depart in peace, then, and that word is pledged absolutely to forget that I ever saw this meeting, and never to speak of it even to my nearest and dearest.'

"This manly speech evidently made a deep impression, and the members began to whisper among themselves, while their officers again consulted. After a few moments the bell again sounded, and the chief, rising, demanded of the society whether it was their pleasure that the pledge should be accepted and Da Costa allowed to depart. A unanimous affirmative was returned, proving the high estimation in which Da Costa was held by all who knew him, and in a few well-chosen words the secretary announced to him that he was at liberty to depart.

"I thank you, gentlemen," said he, simply. "You will never have cause to regret your confidence in me," and, bowing low to the assembly, he passed calmly through the long file of masked figures, and went out at the door, triumphant in his integrity and honor.

"I have written this account of Da Costa's connection with the conspiracy to prove how little he was implicated in its guilt. It is probable that, with the aid of this sworn testimony, the attainder against him may be reversed, and his estates recovered by his family.

"After his departure an animated debate took place regarding my conduct in bringing him to the meeting, but it was finally decided that my imprudence was the result of zeal for the cause, and I was let off with a caution to be more circumspect in the future."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PIRATE'S STORY CONTINUED.

Murder most foul, as at the best it is.—SHAKSPEARE.

"THE next morning Captain Ray and myself waited on Don Manuel and announced to him that we were now prepared with proof against Da Costa; inasmuch as he had attended one of the meetings of the secret society and had been in communication with several of the conspirators. The little villain was so much pleased that he paid us the stipulated reward without demur, and then, with feverish impatience, demanded how soon we would be ready to send in our report to the government.

"'At the end of forty-eight hours,' answered Captain Ray, emphatically, and we took our leave.

"I was somewhat surprised at the captain's answer, because I knew that the report was ready. We had worked at it the whole of the previous night, not going to bed at all, in order to finish it. When we had left the vicinity of Don Manuel's office, I expressed my surprise, and was not a little elated at his answer.

"'Did you ever hear the story of the dog and the elephant, Lyndall?' he asked. 'No? Well, the dog bit the elephant, and, for a short time, made him run, because the big beast was not prepared for him, but, as soon as he *was* prepared, he turned round and *put his foot on the dog!*'

"'Bad for the dog,' I remarked, 'but what has his fate got to do with our affair?'

"'The fact is, that for want of a better, *we* represent the elephant just now,' was his answer.

"'And that little monkey, Manuel, is the dog?' I exclaimed, a light breaking on my mind.

"'Just so!' said he with a smile. 'Don Manuel and myself have long had an account to settle, and this affair gives me a splendid opportunity to discharge my part of the score. In fact I'm going to turn the tables on him. He has paid

us for the information against Da Costa, and, as that is all that comes out of his own pocket, we can't damage him further pecuniarily. As for the government reward, we'll make more the way I'm going to manage it—but I'll tell you more about that when we get to sea. Here is my plan. I shall go to the captain of the port, and the commandant of the coast guard, and notify them, as usual, that we are going to sail on a slave voyage. You are aware that such a notification allows us to sail without the usual search, and, as neither of these officials are on good terms with Don Manuel, I have no fear that he will find out any thing about it. At any rate I will give both of them a few doubloons to keep quiet, and a Spanish official will do any thing for money.

"Your part will be to go to Da Costa, demand a private interview, beg his pardon for the trick you put on him, and then tell him boldly that you fear it will have worse consequences than you possibly could have intended. Tell him that you have received information that the whole conspiracy is discovered and is about to be denounced. Say that a friend of yours, who is a government spy, (in order to repay you for a service performed for him some time ago), has just disclosed to you the fact that every thing is discovered, and, what is worse than all, that *his* name is included in the proscription, through the malevolence of Ferrara. He will believe you, for he well knows that it only requires the faintest breath of suspicion to make a case for these Spanish tyrants. When he *is* convinced, tell him that you and I—who are both implicated—are determined to fly at once, and then offer him a passage in the schooner. Tell him also that it will be better for his partner and his wife to go with him as they will both be persecuted after he is gone, and—*mark me well*—let him bring every bit of money with him that he can scrape together, for he will see very little of what he leaves behind him. As for me, I will get the permit from the captain of the port, and then busy myself in getting the crew on board, and the schooner ready to sail. If every thing goes right we'll sail to-morrow night, and monkey-faced Don Manuel may whistle for his witnesses."

"More than pleased with this new aspect of the affair, for I never had a fancy for being a spy, and was delighted at the

opportunity of tricking Don Manuel, I made the best of my way to Da Costa's place of business. I had less difficulty in obtaining a private interview with him than I had anticipated, for it turned out that he had already heard unpleasant rumors connecting his name with the conspiracy, which was freely spoken of, among a certain class, already. My information, which really had more truth than romance in it, impressed him deeply. As Captain Ray had said, Da Costa was well aware how slight a cause would condemn a man with the Cuban authorities, and he was not long in making up his mind to accept my offer and sail in the schooner.

"His partner, Foster, arrived at the same conclusion. He was an Englishman, and that was enough to condemn him, even if he had not been connected in business with a supposed conspirator. It was finally agreed that they should collect all the money they possibly could, and convey it on board the schooner during that day and the next, and on the following night Da Costa and his family should meet us in a retired spot on the beach, to be taken on board the schooner.

"Every thing worked well at first. The captain of the port made no opposition to our departure, and accepted the bribe which the captain gave him, with the usual Spanish non-chalance. The commandant of the coast guard was equally complaisant; our crew were gathered together and taken on board without exciting suspicion, and late in the evening of the day we were to sail, Captain Ray coolly went to Don Manuel's house, and handed him a sealed packet to be transmitted to the Captain General. The Don received it with joy, for he thought it was the report, whereas it was nothing but an insulting letter informing the authorities how they had been tricked. This piece of pleasantry came near costing us dearly, as will shortly be seen.

"Hurrying down to the beach the captain found me waiting for him and our passengers, and soon afterwards Da Costa and his partner arrived. Da Costa had his child with him, but it had been thought best to allow his wife to follow with a servant in order to prevent suspicion. We waited some time, but the poor lady must have lost her way, for she never came, and just then word was brought to us by one of our men that something unusual was occurring near the mole

where a strong force of the military and the coast guard were embarking. The captain instantly perceived that his trick had been discovered sooner than he had anticipated, and informed Da Costa that he must embark at once. The poor gentleman pleaded hard to be allowed to wait for his wife. Ten minutes grace were accorded, but no more could be granted, and as both the gentlemen had gone too far to recede, they embarked. To remain would only have been to lose their lives, and there was little danger to be apprehended for the lady, in comparison, and she could be sent for when her husband had reached a place of safety.

"We were only just in time, for hardly had we weighed the anchor of the schooner, when we discerned the guard boats swiftly pulling toward us. We set every sail that would draw, and fortunately had a good wind and a fair start. Scarcely had we passed the castle, at the entrance of the harbor, when we saw lights passing to and fro on its battlements, and shortly afterwards a volley of cannon were discharged at us. Escaping unharmed, however, we had increased our distance so much before the next discharge, as to be entirely out of danger, and before morning we were fifty miles from the Island, beyond pursuit. It had been our intention to land our passengers at some point on the southern coast, but they finally induced the captain to carry them to New York, promising to increase the pay agreed upon, and to stand between him and the authorities at New York, in the event of his being questioned about this extraordinary voyage.

"For some days after this new agreement I observed that our captain was moody and disturbed in manner, but I could not conjecture what the cause was until just before we entered the harbor of New York. On that evening he suddenly commanded myself and the first mate to come into his private cabin, and having offered us liquor, told us to be seated.

"'I believe I can trust both of you,' he said, abruptly, when we had done so. 'You have been true so far, and I don't think you would stick at a trifle where plenty of money is to be made?'

"Though certainly surprised, we both assured him that it *would* be no trifle which could make us fail him if the profit was good.

"I thought so," he resumed, coolly. "The trade we have all practiced don't leave men very squeamish. Now, listen, both of you. In the first place, as you well know, we can never go back to Cuba—at least for many years—and therefore we must find another market for our black goods, or *find another trade.*"

"We replied that this was perfectly true, and he went on.

"Now, this being the case, I have formed a plan which not only will give us plenty of money at once, but will put us into a trade authorized by law, suiting our dispositions exactly, and giving us an opportunity to make our fortunes in a few years."

"And what may this plan be?" we inquired, in astonishment.

"You shall hear," he continued, with a sardonic smile. "I have lately heard that a company has been formed in England for the purpose of fitting out vessels to cruise in search of pirates in the Indian seas. This company being authorized by the Crown, its vessels will sail under the commission of the government granted to that company. I propose, then, *when we have got rid of our passengers*, to sail to England, and offer ourselves to that company at the head of which is the Earl of Bellamont, and when we get the commission, it will be our own fault if we do not turn it to account."

"Of course this proposition accorded with our views exactly, but we desired information as to where the ready money of which he spoke was to come from.

"That is the best part of the plan, and I hinted it to you, Will, in the Havana," he said, promptly. "You are well aware that our passengers have both got gold to a very large amount. They are refugees from their homes, and no one knows that they are coming here. What is easier than to silence them at once, bury them in the ocean, and take their gold for our own uses?"

"At this startling proposition silence fell upon us as a sudden blight, but we were already hardened even to look on murder as a trivial thing—God forgive us!—and before long we had assented to his plan and decided upon the mode of its execution. About noon-tide we entered the lower bay of the harbor of New York, and after dark we passed the

Narrows and sailed slowly up the inner bay. We had intended to dispose of our passengers before we gained this point, but for some reason not known to us they had remained together in their cabin, and had given us no quiet opportunity.

"Finally, however, we neared the small island which lies directly opposite the fort where I now am, and the two gentlemen came on deck and stood just aft of the main rigging on the port quarter. The captain at once gave the signal for action, and it was so dark that we stole up close behind them without alarming them in the least. I was nearest to them, and while making ready to fall upon them, I heard Da Costa say,

"Foster, although we are so near our destination, I can not dispossess my mind of a gloom which seems to portend evil. I have told you all about my marriage, and you well know the house in which her father resides. If anything *should* happen to me, take the child to her grandfather, and tell him to care for her until her mother reclaims her. He is a violent man and unjust. You must make him swear to do this, and he will not break his oath.

"Foster took the child from its father's arms and murmured something that I did not hear, for at that instant the captain gave the signal and he and I darted at once upon our victims. I beheld the captain's heavy sword fall with terrible force upon the father's head, and the unfortunate man, reeling with the blow, fell over the low quarter-rail into the dark waters. At the same moment I dealt Foster a thrust with my poniard full in the chest, and with a cry of horror which even now rings in my ears, he leaped overboard with the child still in his arms.

"Our work was done, and we hastened to profit by it. We found a large sum—more even than we had expected—in the baggage of the unfortunate men. Reserving a certain sum to furnish the equipments of the vessel in the new trade we were about to engage in, the rest was divided equally between us. The baggage was then thrown overboard and we came to anchor just opposite the lower point of the city, but close under the shore of Long Island. Shortly after this, the watch on deck reported that the small-boat was missing, the painter having evidently been cut. This circumstance startled us all,

for we suddenly recollect that this boat had been towing alongside on the port quarter close to the spot where the bloody deed had been committed. It was possible, nay, extremely probable, that one, if not both of our victims, had been able to gain the boat, as we were sailing very slowly at the time, and had escaped to the shore. The possibility even of such an occurrence was enough for us, and though our original intention had been to land in New York, we immediately hove up the anchor and keeping close under the eastern shore, ran up to the Sound and thence commenced our voyage for England at once.

"Of our subsequent lives I need say nothing now. From being the pursuers of pirates we became pirates ourselves, and for many years our hands have been stained with the blood of the innocent and the helpless. May Heaven in its mercy forgive us, for men can not! I solemnly swear that all I have here written is true, and I firmly believe that Captain Ray—otherwise Oscar Dale—is the murderer, assisted by myself, of his sister's husband.

"Signed on my death-bed by me, WILLIAM LYNDALL, in the presence of
RUPERT GLYDE, Stipendiary Magistrate,
"HENRY FROST, Merchant"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CRYPTOGRAM.

VAL I' faith a marvelous crabbed hand
And apes his disposition.—MARLOW SALE.

MAR. What though he sunk his treasure deep i' th' earth,
Yet we shall find it.—IBID.

This terrible revelation fell upon Ella like the stroke of the thunderbolt, and for many days she hovered between life and death. None knew the cause of her sudden illness, for she had managed to conceal the paper before she utterly gave way; and when once more consciousness returned she gave no hint to any which would explain her singular malady.

Fearfully changed, both in mind and body, pale and wan in aspect, taciturn and cold in manner, she moved about as she regained strength, the ghost of her former self, utterly joyless and utterly purposeless. Oscar Dale, in the mean while, failed rapidly, and when she was able to leave the house, he was unconscious, and slowly sinking into death. With a heroism such as few would have been capable of, growing out of an earnest desire that none but herself should ever know the fearful secret just revealed to her, she visited her hapless brother as before, but he did not know her, and she felt a strange relief that it was so.

Shortly after this, Lawrence Dale announced to her that he had solved the cryptogram, and to prove that the solution was correct gave the following explanation of the process he had adopted to discover its key :

"The signs or cipher used in any cryptogram writing must always be arbitrary: in other words, if more than one sign was used to designate any simple letter such confusion would result that it would be useless for the purpose of conveying intelligence. It follows, therefore, that every such writing has a regular and organized key, varying only with the initial plan used in its construction. The first step to a solution of any cipher is, of course, to determine the language which was used to compose it. In the case before me this was almost positively decided by the fact that several regular words, and two figures in English, concluded the sentence or paragraph. It was reasonable to suppose that the same language was used in the whole. The next point was the nature of the cipher itself, and this proved to be the most simple in use—a mere transposition of one letter of the alphabet for another according of course to a regular rule. This rule therefore only remained to be discerned, and I was justified in supposing that an illiterate man, such as the writer is described to me to have been, would make use of no very complicated arrangements in constructing his key.

"These points decided upon, I next analyzed the cipher in order to discover the frequency with which either of the letters or signs were used. The whole number of letters, exclusive of the regular words at the end, I found to be sixty-four; of these ten consisted of the sign +. The most frequent letter

was *s*, which was repeated seven times; following this, *g*, *h*, *i*, each used five times, *r*, *l*, *o*; *d*, each repeated four times *m*, thrice, *w*, *f*, *z*, and *x*, repeated twice, and *y*, *p*, *n*, and *b* each used once. Nineteen different characters therefore, composed the whole sentence, and if I could discover the meaning of four of these viz., *s*, *g*, *h*, and *i*, I should have twenty-five of the whole number of letters, and with four more solved viz., *r*, *l*, *o*, and *d*, I should have forty-one, or two-thirds of the whole sentence. Eight letters, therefore, when their meaning was known would give me an almost certain clue to the key, and to these eight letters I have first applied myself.

"In ordinary English composition, the letter *e* is almost invariably the one that most frequently occurs in any given number of words, with this fact as a guide I selected the character recurring the greatest number of times in my analysis—which was the sign “+”—and adopted that as the letter *e*. On referring to the cryptogram itself I found that three of the combinations of characters, standing separate, were similar, viz., *g*, *s*, *x*. Now of the words of three letters ending in *e*, in English, the article *the* is most frequently used in ordinary writing; I was justified by this fact in adopting *g*, *s*, + as *the*, the more so because *t*, and *h*, are the next most frequently used in common reading, and in this sentence *s*, which stood for *h*, was repeated seven times, and *g*, five times. I had now three of the eight letters, if my theory was right, and on referring to my analysis again I found that the characters *h*, and *i*, followed those just mentioned in frequency of repetition. In common writing *s* and *r* follow this order as to frequency after *e*, *h*, and *t*, and as the rule had at least given sense in making a real word out of the combination *gs+*, I adopted these two letters in the places of *h*, and *i*. This gave me five letters, and I now arranged these wherever I found them in the sentence, leaving spaces between the combinations, and blanks for those not yet ascertained. This arrangement then presented the following appearance:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
“— —	<i>the</i>	— — —	<i>h</i> — — <i>se</i>	— — —	<i>er</i>	<i>the</i>
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
— <i>here</i>	<i>the</i>	— — — —	— — <i>s</i>	<i>str</i> — — — <i>e</i> —	— —	<i>he</i> — <i>r</i>
15	16					
— — — —	<i>ee</i> — <i>r</i> — <i>h</i>					

"My notice was at once attracted by the fourth combination, which by the addition of two more letters could be made to read *horse*, or *house*. Now, as I had already determined that the character *i*, stood for *r*, and as this character did not occur in the combination, I decided that the word was *house*, and thus gained two more letters. Using these letters wherever the characters representing them again occurred, I found that the first letter of the fifth combination was *u*, and in all probability that, as that group ended in *er*, the word itself was *under*.

"When I had reached this point, I suddenly made a discovery which facilitated my labor in no ordinary degree, and from that moment the solution of the cryptogram was easy. I found that the letters *m* and *n* were interchangeable: that is, that *m* was used for *n*, and *vice versa*. Now *m* is the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, *n*, of course, being the fourteenth. It appeared at once, therefore, that in forming the key, the alphabet had been divided in half, and possibly had been merely transposed in this fashion. This view was confirmed by the fact that *h*, the eighth letter in the alphabet, was used for *s*, also interchangeably—*s* being the nineteenth letter, and falling into that exact position opposite *h* when the alphabet was so arranged.

"The key, therefore, to the cipher (substituting the sign \dashv for *v*, opposite *e*,) was as follows:

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. <i>a=z.</i> | 3. <i>c=x.</i> | 5. <i>e=‐‐‐.</i> | 7. <i>g=t.</i> | 9. <i>i=r.</i> | 11. <i>k=p</i> |
| 2. <i>b=y.</i> | 4. <i>d=w.</i> | 6. <i>f=u.</i> | 8. <i>h=s.</i> | 10. <i>j=q.</i> | 12. <i>l=o.</i> |
| 13. <i>m=n.</i> | | | | | |

"These characters were used throughout interchangeably, and with their aid the cryptogram was readily translated into a sentence reading with sense and in English. The solution was, therefore, as follows:

"'In the old house, under the spot where the blow was stricken, my heir will search, 13 feet E. N. E. inner angle.'"

Though it was impossible that the mysterious document could be translated into any thing like sense by any other key than that so logically deduced from Lawrence's researches and though the sentence read plainly enough as it now stood, still, the mystery remained as great, to Ella, as ever. She had no knowledge of any thing to which the words could

possibly refer, nor did she understand--though her father's will distinctly averred that she would--either the diagram or the message.

In this dilemma she called both her brother and his son, and the trio at once commenced the investigation. Throughout every nook and corner of the old house they searched, every room from garret to basement was examined with the utmost care, but nothing, either in the arrangement of the rooms or their walls and beams, could be found that resembled the diagram. Not content with this, each floor was carefully scrutinized, and at last, in the lower room where the old miser had died, they discovered a trap-door, the existence of which had been unknown to both Lewis and Ella. On raising this, they found that it gave access to a small cellar, built under the front and south side of the house in the form of an η , the dock timbers filling up the north-east corner. This was an arrangement which corresponded to the lines of the diagram, if the paper was held with its blank side uppermost; and the words in the center of the diagram evidently pointed out that this must be done in order to understand it. Satisfied that they were on the right track, their next endeavor was to decide which was the "inner angle" referred to in the sentence beneath the figure, and on examining the paper again carefully, Lawrence discovered a small cross in the center of the lower square, and at the corner of the upper square projecting into it. This corresponded with the corner of the wharf which filled up about one quarter of the space beneath the house, the extreme angle standing nearly in its center.

Their next difficulty was to measure thirteen feet east-north-east from this angle, a direction which would lead them into the substance of the dock itself. This was formed of massive timbers, strongly bolted together, and filled in with stone, and nowhere could they find an opening by which they could penetrate it from the cellar. After many fruitless attempts they retired to the upper room again, to consult as to what should be done next, resolving, indeed, that if no other way presented itself, they would have that portion of the wharf torn down.

While Ella and Lewis were anxiously engaged in discussing this plan, Lawrence occupied himself in closely examining

the floor of the room, and in doing so, accidentally shut down the trap-door leading into the cellar. An instant afterward the others were surprised by a sudden exclamation from him which caused them to turn at once toward him. He was kneeling on the trap, and carefully tracing out certain lines upon the floor with his finger.

"See here, father!" he said, with something of exultation in his tone "these lines form a similar figure to the diagram again."

They were instantly at his side, and soon saw that he was right. The edges of the trap-door formed one square of the figure, and in its north-east corner two boards, of a darker color than the others of which it was made, formed the intruding angle of the other square, the outlines of which were completed, on the floor itself, by other boards of a similar color to the darkest ones in the trap. It was evident, on examination, that these planks were artificially discolored, and probably for the very purpose to which the diagram referred. Invigorated by this new sign, Lewis carefully measured the prescribed distance from the angle corresponding to the corner of the dock in the cellar, and, by the aid of a pocket compass conformed precisely to the required direction.

At the end of the line thus traced, which ended just beneath the window overlooking the wharf, they found three boards which appeared to have been taken up and afterward replaced. A few moments sufficed to tear these from their fastenings, and beneath them they discovered a large flagstone with an iron ring in its center. Convinced that they had at last discovered the object of their search, Lewis and his son grasped the iron ring, and with some difficulty raised the stone, disclosing the head of a steep flight of steps as wide as the aperture itself. Depositing the stone on the floor, they now lighted a large lantern and descended into the gloomy hole, which the light but feebly illuminated. Their astonishment may be conceived when it is stated that they found themselves in a large, vaulted chamber, at least fifteen feet square, evidently constructed below the level of the cellar, and even below the bed of the river. The walls were of stone, and of such massive thickness that, though damp, they resisted the ingress of moisture to any greater degree. A

number of boxes and bales were piled up in different corners, and appeared to be in a good state of preservation, notwithstanding their long concealment in the vault. To one of these piles, directly facing the steps, a large placard was affixed, upon which they read the following words :

" *To my daughter ELLA :*

" In explanation of the existence of this secret vault, I have to say that it is much older than the house which stands above it. It was first constructed by the Dutch as a magazine. Since the house was built, it has been used to conceal smuggled goods. What it is used for now, look to the east and behold !

" MARTIN DALE."

Lawrence read this document aloud, and, as the last words fell from his lips, the trio simultaneously turned to the quarter indicated, and gazed into the gloom with straining eyes. At first naught was visible save dark outlines and vague shadows, which seemed to advance and recede with every flicker of the dim light they carried ; but, as they slowly advanced to that extremity of the vault, the uncertain shadows resolved themselves into a large stone box, roughly hewn from a massive block of granite and covered with a ponderous lid of iron. On this lid rested a smaller chest, perhaps eighteen inches long and a foot in depth, composed entirely of iron and fastened with a large padlock, the key of which, however, remained in it. Near the head of the stone coffin—for such it proved to be—a brass plate was riveted to the iron cover, and on this was engraved the following inscription :

" In this sarcophagus rest the mortal remains of Greta, the beloved wife of Martin Dale, murdered on the fourth day of August, 1684. May God judge the murderer, and receive his victim into the rest which passeth all understanding."

Bending over the rude stone coffin, the children of the miser and his unfortunate wife, read together these pitiful words. For the first time they became aware of the place of the sepulcher of their mother, and for the first time they learned that she had not died a natural death. In that somber subterranean chamber, faintly illuminated by the ghastly, flickering light of the dim lantern, they found their parent and read the record of her fate. That the moment was one which would remain an indelible landmark in their future life-journey will be readily conceived ; but the sensations of awe and

sorrow which filled their hearts, and forced the life-blood from their pallid cheeks as they thus suddenly chanced upon the fearful secret, can not be expressed save to the imaginations of those who have some time in this fateful life suffered from a similar horror.

Recovering from their emotion they next directed their attention to the iron box resting on the lid of the coffin. Tied to a large handle at the top of this box was a piece of parchment inscribed, "for my daughter Ella, solely," and having read this, Lewis placed the box upon his shoulder, and the trio immediately ascended the steps to the room above. Having replaced the stone and the boards, the box was placed upon a table in the center of the room and Lewis essayed to open it, but while doing so, his eye again rested on the parchment.

"Ella," said he, "this box is for you and you only. Really disinherited by my father, I have no wish to pry into his secrets. We must retire and leave you alone to penetrate its mystery."

Ella, overcome by emotions not to be analyzed, only replied by bowing her head, and Lewis and his son departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE IRON BOX.

"Read the dark legend, and respect the secret."—OLD PLAY.

LEFT alone, Ella nerved herself to the task which all this extraordinary preamble told her was one of a singular if not fearful nature. With a firm hand she unlocked the box and raised its lid, and having gazed for a moment upon their contents, lifted them one by one and placed them on the table. First came a short but heavy knife, its blade encrusted with rust and the handle stained with an ominous stain, that bore terrible testimony to the cause of the blade's corrosion. Next a necklace of pearls, the gold links which fastened them together tarnished and twisted and the pearls themselves dyed with the same sinister stain, and finally two rolls of manuscript

—one of which was bound by a tress of raven hair, and seemed to be the most ancient, and the other wrapped around a small book and bound by a leathern belt, which seemed to have been a seaman's.

A few moments given to bitter thought, a tear to the memory of the dead mother who had been a guardian saint to her, a sigh to the retrospect of her early life with her father and Ella raised the oldest of the manuscripts and prepared to read it. Unbinding the folds from the tress of hair she reverently pressed that to her lips and laid it down beside her; then, unfolding the scroll, she read the following narrative, which was dated nearly fifteen years before :

" I am an old man now, not so much by the lapse of the years of my pilgrimage, though these number nearly three score, but because my lot has been one of sorrow, my life since early manhood one of grief and bitterness; but, it is not to wail for the joys which never have been mine, nor to record an unavailing regret, that I sit down to write these lines. My task is only to chronicle certain sad and terrible events which, in their consequence, have left me a lonely and revengeful man and have reft from my life the only gleam of sunshine its darkness ever knew.

" In early life, when I was scarcely more than a boy, I first met Greta Schonberg. To know her was to love her, and when I did know her I poured out at her feet the passionate love of a nature vehement in its lightest emotions. At first I dreamed that I was not indifferent to her, and, at last, that she loved me in return. I was deceived, not by her, but by my own vanity and self-esteem. I shall never forget my waking from that dream, and even now, when my pulses are sluggish and the weight of years and sorrow has almost eradicated the thought of love from my heart, I wonder that my fiery brain withstood the shock of the discovery that she only regarded me as a friend. It came at last, however, and I heard with outward calmness but an internal frenzy which closely verged on madness, that she had given her heart to another and was about to bestow her hand on my favored rival.

" No living being saw the despair with which I was overwhelmed. Closely shut in my heart of hearts, I hid the raging volcano which almost consumed me, and with a smile

upon my lips, I calmly assisted at her marriage ceremony. I could have torn his heart out, and devoted it to the infernal gods, as he stood there joyous at the altar ; but I did not, and he wedded her. I had determined to leave the land of my birth immediately after this catastrophe to my hopes ; but fortunately, or, perhaps, unfortunately, my rival, her husband, suddenly fell ill and died before I had completed my preparations. The shock of his death, scarcely eight months after their marriage, threw her into a severe illness from which she barely escaped with life, after giving birth to twin sons.

" The removal of my rival, for as such only did I ever think of him, gave me a new hope, and changing my plans, again I devoted myself to her service with the assiduity of a slave. When she was sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, her family removed her to Albany, where their homestead was situated. Thither I followed her, and neglected no opportunity of endeavoring to serve her, and present myself to her in the most favorable light. In this I was assisted by being appointed agent for the settlement of her late husband's affairs, the business connected with which necessitated many interviews, and as time passed I saw with trembling joy that she began to forget her old love, and even thought sometimes of me. Her health for a long time continued very delicate, so that she was not able to nurse her babes. They were accordingly placed with a farmer's wife, to whom a child had also lately been born, at some distance from the Schonberg homestead. Before long, intelligence was received that one of the children had been killed by the accidental falling of a tree, and though the mother's grief was deep and lasting, in this misfortune too I found an opportunity of rendering myself necessary to her. Though I fairly hated the babes because they were *his* children, yet I mourned with and comforted her and was at her right hand in all the arrangements for the dead child's burial.

" This fancied tie of common sorrow bound her to me still more strongly, and before two years had elapsed from her child's death, I had the inexpressible joy of hearing her declare that she would be my wife. With every decent argument that I could use I pressed the ceremony forward, and

though my feverish impatience made the interval seem an age, the day dawned at last; I wedded her and bore her home in triumph. For many years not a shadow, *save one*, clouded my happiness—the only interval of perfect joy my life has ever known—and I fondly think that I made her days happy till I lost her.

The one alloy to my complete content was centered in her eldest boy, the surviving child of her first marriage. Though I had formally adopted him to please her, and though he was known only by my name, he resembled his father in so many ways that at last I grew to detest him bitterly. He was a frank, warm-hearted, generous boy, and I sorrowfully feel that had he been treated better he would have been a comfort rather than a thorn to me. I chose the wrong course, however, and I believe at last he felt for me the same aversion I had always shown to him. It is not necessary to detail the endless slights and indignities I put upon him; suffice it to say that he was brave even under a load of petty torture that a man would have found it hard to bear, and that his love for his mother sustained him. He never complained of any thing, and she never knew but that his life was as happy as that of the other children she had borne to me. This much I *must* say in his favor, though I have fearful cause to remember the ample vengeance he at last visited upon me through her innocent heart.

"As he grew older, he became more independent in his manner towards me, though he did not change in his conduct to his mother. He absented himself frequently from the house, remaining away sometimes for weeks, and when I remonstrated angrily, plainly told me that he was endeavoring to find some means of subsistence, which would enable him to withdraw from my protection altogether. It may be supposed, that from this time we were more estranged than ever, and not unfrequently when I met him coming in at late hours, we were engaged in serious quarrels. His mother remained in ignorance of this state of affairs between us, but began to fear that Oscar was growing dissipated, a fear which I believe was only too well founded.

"When he had quite reached the age of manhood these absences of his grew more frequent and uncertain, and,

besides this, he began to be very mysterious in his habits. I would find him up and roaming through the house in the dead of night, and, on two occasions, when I had grown angry beyond control, and had fairly locked him in his room, I found him shortly afterwards in the sitting-room, apparently searching for something. When I asked how he got out of his room, he would give no explanation, and appeared much confused, retiring to his apartment as quickly as possible.

"At last I plainly told him that he could not continue such habits any longer in my house, and threatened that on the next occasion I discovered him so engaged, I would have him arrested as a midnight robber, not that I deemed he was trying to steal from me, but because I wished to affront and mortify him. He answered hotly, as I might have known he would from his fiery nature, and left me without a promise of reform or a word of explanation.

"I now approach the event which I have written these pages to record—an event not only terrible in its consequences to myself, but productive of misery and woe to all who bear my name—and I shudder and groan in anguish when I even think that my task compels me to recall it. It must be done, however, in justification to myself, and in order that my daughter may know the reason I have for disinheriting her brothers.

"One night, about a fortnight after my threat against Oscar, I was sitting by the fire in the lower room of the house, engaged in examining some accounts connected with my business which had to be ready by the morning. My wife and the youngest children had retired to rest some hours before, and so, I thought, had Oscar. He had been silent and moody at the evening meal, and when he had finished, went at once to his room, from which I had not heard him emerge afterwards. I was mistaken, however, for about one o'clock I heard an uncertain footstep coming along the stone pathway which led to my door, and, in another moment, Oscar opened it and entered. He had been drinking, or was otherwise much excited, as I saw at once. His usually pale face was flushed and bloated, and he looked altogether unlike his commonly trim and gentlemanly self. He seemed startled when he saw me sitting by the fire, and drew back as if to go out again.

Changing his determination, however, he flushed up still more darkly in the face, and, without speaking, crossed the room, as if to go into the hall and thence to his room.

"Stop, sir!" I exclaimed, sternly, when I saw this action. "Have you forgotten already what I told you but a few days since?"

"He halted, but did not answer, and turning his bloodshot eyes upon me, seemed to stare in stupid wonder.

"Did I not tell you that I would have you arrested as a common robber, the next time I found you entering the house at this hour?"

"My question appeared at first to confound him, and it was evident that he had either forgotten my threat, or intoxication had obliterated the recollection. Crossing the room hastily, he stood before me a moment, with a look in which astonishment gradually gave place to anger.

"Arrest me as a robber?" he said, at last, hoarsely, and in a voice totally unlike his usual tones. "Old man, are you growing crazy?"

"The impudence of this question and his manner, fairly put me in the condition he hinted at, and, with an incoherence and frenzy I have ever been astonished at, I not only repeated my threat, but overwhelmed him with opprobrious epithets. At first he seemed as angry as myself, but before I had ended my storm of abuse, he cooled rapidly:

"'Come, come,' he said in a voice of contemptuous pity. 'You do not know what you are saying. You should be taken care of, old gentleman!' and he laid his hand upon my arm with such a gesture as one might use in patting an angry cur."

"His touch and his supercilious words, caused my already frenzied rage to culminate in a torrent of rage, and without a thought of what I was doing, I clenched my fist and struck him with my full force in the face. He staggered back with a cut and bleeding cheek, but in the next instant he had bounded forward and thrown me to the floor. I was not much hurt, but I was demoniac in my anger, and as I rose, I grasped a heavy iron bar lying near the window, which was used to fasten the shutters, and when I gained my feet I rushed upon him with the weapon uplifted to crush him.

• What passed next I scarcely know. I heard his exclamation of alarm, and saw him thrust his right hand in his breast, and a bright flash as from the blade of a knife as he withdrew it. At the same instant a white-robed form came flitting in at the doorway leading to the hall, and rushed between us. There was a struggle, an attempt on my part to strike him with the iron bar, a vivid flash as he thrust at me with the knife, a thrilling scream, and a white heap which sunk down at our feet, bloody and insensible! He had stabbed his mother—and *she*—she had lost her life to save mine! worthless and lonely evermore.

“ With a cry of abject terror, the murderer sunk upon his knee by the side of his victim, but, after one straining look into her pallid face, he sprung to his feet again and hurried rapidly from the room. Transfixed with horror I stood over my beloved wife, utterly unable to move a muscle, for I seemed turning to stone as I gazed. But, though I was powerless to move, my hearing was preternaturally acute, and I heard every movement of the murderer from the time he left the room. At once ascending to his own apartment, he appeared to have dashed in the door with one violent blow, and immediately afterwards I thought I heard voices speaking in anger. This was, doubtless, the effect of my nervous excitement, or else the villain talked to himself as he made his hurried preparations for flight. At length I heard him raise the window over the porch, throw something heavily to the ground below, and then descend himself by the aid of the lattice work. Then I heard his feet beating rapidly upon the stone pavement, and in a few seconds the sound died away in the distance.

“ The sudden silence restored me to myself as if by a stroke of lightning. With the recovery of my bodily power came the sole idea that the murderer was escaping, and that I must pursue him. Instantly rushing to the door, I darted out into the night, and followed fast upon his flying footsteps. All in vain; I could find no trace of him, and the thought that my wife still lay weltering in her blood in that lonely room, arrested my steps, and turned me back in haste to the dwelling—now, alas! the abode of woe unutterable.

“ She lay in the same position in which I had left her, bu-

the blood had ceased to flow and she was reviving. Raising her tenderly in my arms I bore her carefully to our room, and laid her upon the bed. I then essayed to leave her again, in order to procure the assistance of a physician, but in a weak and trembling voice she restrained me. When I had given her some wine at her own request, she grew stronger, and to my utter astonishment, spoke as follows:

"Martin, my husband, you love me well, I know. Promise me—it is the last request I shall make of you, for I am dying—promise me not to denounce my unfortunate son."

"I could not answer her at first, so great was my rage and wonder, but, at last, I broke forth into a torrent of invective which was almost instantly arrested, when I beheld her increasing pallor, the result of terror and weakness.

"My husband," she said, when I was silent, in a low, thrilling and mournful voice which even now rings through my brain, "my dear husband, you have never yet refused me aught. Would you see me go down into the grave fearing that my son would be pursued by your vengeance to the gallows, for a deed which, after all, was but an accident?"

"I could not reply, I could only weep, so touching and so mournful was this appeal. Kneeling beside her dying bed I heard her implore me not to seek vengeance for her loss, but leave to heaven the retribution which must surely come. I can not realize how I came to consent at last—I only know I did so, and swore a solemn oath not to denounce the assassin. Then she grew calm again, and permitted me to seek assistance. A worthy physician who could be trusted was hastily summoned, and enough was told him to satisfy him that her wound was the result of accident. His utmost skill was employed in her behalf, but all in vain. As the golden dawn came streaming up the eastern sky, her gentle spirit ascended to float upon its rosy shadows home to God. Her last look was upon my horror-stricken face, her last words solemnly bade me remember my oath.

"Thus it was that I have never pursued to an earthly judgment the murderer of my beloved Greta, but I never promised to befriend him, and assuredly no atom of my wealth ever shall be gripped by his bloody fingers.

"The circumstances of her death were kept as secret as

possible, and though its suddenness alarmed and horrified my other children, they never knew how it came to pass. The officers of the law were easily satisfied, with the aid of the physician, and the funeral took place in due course with little of that show or pomp which she would have loathed. I could not bear, however, that her loved form should rest so far from me in the lonely churchyard, and with the aid of the friendly physician who had by my direction embalmed her body when she died, I stole her from that solitary place by night, and bore her here, so that I might gaze upon her lovely face whenever my heart grew heavy.

"Oscar, the murderer, thus passed out of my life and plans, but my sorrows were not yet ended. Lewis, my first-born, also proved a traitor. I had grown harsher and more exacting after my darling's death, and doubtless this estranged my son and made him a hypocrite and a liar. How I gradually learned that he was both, it boots not to tell, but at last he was guilty of a treachery which caused me to banish him from my heart and home for ever.

"You, my daughter, were the cause--the innocent cause of this catastrophe. When Alphonse Da Costa first began to pay his addresses to you, I had no fault to find either with him or you. I knew that you must at some future period leave me for the house of a husband, and I felt that he was one to whom I could safely trust you. Lewis, however, was jealous of the favor I evinced toward you, or he was mercenary and wished to prejudice my mind against you in order that he might inherit the whole of my estate. I know not which was the true motive that actuated him, perhaps both, perhaps neither, but he certainly concocted a plot which only too surely accomplished the end he positively had in view, your banishment from my house and, for a time, your estrangement from my heart.

"At first he confined himself to sly insinuations against Alphonse, implying that he was not what he seemed, a manly, honorable merchant. After a little he proceeded to bolder charges of fraud and knavery, and, finally, he one night laid before me carefully prepared proofs that Da Costa had meanly cheated me and others of large sums. The proof was so plainly genuine that my anger, always so hasty, was aroused

almost to madness, and, as ill fortune would have it, the **very** next day you announced to me your betrothal, and Da Costa solicited my consent.

" You too surely recollect my conduct on that occasion, and I can not blame you for asserting your natural right of free choice, and for flying from your harsh father with your betrothed husband. This very flight brought me to my senses, and moreover, the absence of your husband—which necessitated the settlement of his affairs by his partner, Foster—proved to me that Lewis had wilfully lied, and that Da Costa was not guilty of the knavery with which he had been charged. When I saw how I had been duped, I visited my first wrath—*just*, this time, if never before—on the head of the offender, and banished my only remaining child from my hearth for ever. Since then I have lived a lonely man, and so I shall live till death enables me to meet once more, my only love, my darling, murdered Greta. Pray, my child, pray always for the soul of your unfortunate, heart-broken father."

CHAPTER IX.

TRUTH THAT IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.

HAMLET. Look upon this picture; and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.—SHAKS.

They were as various in their sev'ral minds
As are the mountains and the clouds that ape them.—ANON.

If Ella had been overwhelmed by the shock of learning that her husband met his death at the hands of her step brother, how much greater became her misery when this new evidence of atrocity on his part was laid before her. To find also that her own brother Lewis—the only friend she had remaining in the world—had been the cause of her banishment from home, and that he had treacherously poisoned her father's mind against her husband, was sufficient to nearly banish reason from its throne. The shock, however, had been **too great; the weight of the blow stunned and paralyzed,**

instead of rending, her mental powers; and the only connected thought she could entertain was that the tale was a horrible mistake. She *dared* not believe it, and to that instinctive fear she probably was indebted for the retention of her sanity.

Scarcely had she reached the end of her father's terrible narrative, when gathering the papers in her hands with nervous haste, she ran rather than walked to the room in which Lewis and his son awaited her.

"Read, read!" she exclaimed, frantically thrusting the document into her astonished brother's hands. "Read, and tell me that it is all a lie, a wicked lie! Oh! I can not, can not bear it!" and sinking down upon the floor she gave way to a fearful paroxysm of hysterical emotion.

While Lawrence endeavored to soothe her, and rendered her every assistance in his power, his father, impressed by her manner with the necessity of promptitude, hastily read the narrative, interrupting himself only from time to time by strange ejaculations of horror and dismay. When he had finished its perusal she had become somewhat calmer, and in an even and somewhat stern voice he addressed her thus:

"Ella, it is clear to me now that our father was insane. I have long believed this to be the fact, but now I am almost sure of it. As to the charge this wild narrative brings against me I have only to say that it is utterly untrue. I never said a word to the prejudice of Alphonse Da Costa, and had I known that he was a suitor for your hand I would gladly have aided him—for I loved him well. I remember that at the time of, or just before your departure, I had occasion to prove to my father that a merchant by the name of Andrew Dacres had cheated and defrauded him, but how he could possibly have perverted this revelation as referring to Da Costa I can not account for on any other hypothesis than that he was crazy. I never have understood until now why he drove me from his home, but I was too proud then to seek an explanation, and but for this paper I never should have known the reason. I believe that our mother's sudden death completely destroyed his natural equilibrium and that he never was quite sane afterward."

"But, Lewis," pleaded Ella, a ray of hope breaking through the dark cloud of terror which had so nearly destroyed her;

"Lewis, if this is so—and I can not doubt you, brother—if the tale is false as regards yourself, may it not also be untrue as to Oscar? Is it not possible that the circumstances of my poor mother's death, as detailed by him, are also a delusion—a first delusion—of our unfortunate father's. Is it not reasonable to suppose that when he found her dying from the breaking of a blood-vessel, as we have always been told, that his reason succumbed at once and he fancied all that he has written there?"

"Really, Ella, the supposition is more than probable," responded Lewis, after a thoughtful pause. "The more so from the fact that he really disliked Oscar because he was the son of his former rival, and nothing could be more natural than that he should associate the catastrophe with the object of his hate if his reason did give way then."

Relieved in a slight degree by this very plausible supposition, the brother and sister remained for some time silent and thoughtful. At last Ella, raising her head, seemed to come to a final determination.

"I think, Lewis," she said, firmly, "that Oscar ought to be informed of this, if he revives sufficiently to understand it. It is no more than right that he should have an opportunity to deny and explain a charge so foul and terrible."

"You are right, my sister," answered Lewis. "Let us pray that he may revive and be able to explain it."

No more was said at this time, and Ella immediately retired to her bed, from which she did not rise again for many days. Lewis and Lawrence watched both their sister and Oscar with diligent care and at last Sea Weed demanded to be allowed permission to nurse her lover's aunt. It was not long after her installation in this new duty that Ella learned to love her, and this feeling was heartily reciprocated by our heroine. A mysterious instinct seemed to tell them that they were more to each other than was apparent, and as Ella slowly regained her strength they became absolutely inseparable.

Soon after Ella became strong enough to visit her step-brother, he was pronounced by the physician sufficiently recovered to be able to receive the important communication which Lewis had informed the doctors it was necessary to make to

him. Accordingly Ella and Lewis, having prepared him previously by hinting at the nature of what they had to tell him, took advantage of a favorable moment when they found him cheerful and strong, and gradually unfolded to him the terrible tale which the dying mate had written and sworn to, and the legacy which her father had left, in the iron box, for Ella.

It would be unnecessary to dwell upon the feelings with which he received these fearful charges. Pale and stern, he listened to the whole without moving or replying, the only evidences of his emotion being the alternate flushing and paling of his wan cheek and the involuntary clenching of his hands or the compression of his thin lips, as a sentence of more than ordinary interest was pronounced. When all had been told he lay for some moments plunged in profound thought, while with anxious, pleading looks his brother and sister gazed upon him.

"Speak, Oscar," exclaimed Ella, at last, fearfully impatient at his silence. "Have you, indeed, nothing to say in reply to these horrible accusations?"

Rousing himself with an effort, he drew a deep sigh, and turning upon her a look which was an earnest of the truth of his words, he said:

"Yes, Ella, I have much to say, but I must reflect before I do so. I can only tell you now, before God, to whom I shall shortly go, that I am completely and thoroughly innocent of both these charges. Both of my accusers had ample cause to believe me guilty, and I have done wrong in concealing the truth so long. Not that I knew I was deemed guilty of these crimes, for, as God is my judge, I learn them now for the first time."

"But how is this?—what is this mystery?" exclaimed both of his listeners, in profound astonishment. "Who, then, did commit these deeds of darkness?"

"*My twin brother!*" was his solemn and most unexpected answer, and a silence that was ominous and terrible fell upon the group.

"Leave me now," said Oscar, at last, when this silence had endured until it grew painful. "Leave me, but let me keep those papers. Return to-morrow morning, and I shall be prepared to tell you all I know. Bring paper and pens with

you, Lewis, for it will be best to reduce my statement to writing. My memory will be blotted sufficiently with error as it is, so that I should neglect no precaution to keep it clean from this further stain."

They did his bidding patiently, and the next day he solemnly related to them the following statement, which was taken down by Lewis as he uttered each sentence :

" As you know, I was but a babe when our mother married your father, but it seems to me that even in my infancy I imbibed a singular dislike to him. Be that as it may, it is certain that as I grew older I hated him heartily, and, though this is not a pleasant thing to tell you, he evidently despised as well as hated me. A morbid desire to fly from him, and a home which seemed to me only bestowed on me in charity, grew and gathered strength in my mind even from early childhood, and I only delayed doing so because I loved and was beloved by my dear mother.

" When I was about fourteen years old, I suddenly and most unexpectedly became acquainted with a secret that I have kept inviolate until yesterday. This was the fact that my twin brother was living; and I must relate at length the manner in which it was communicated to me, and the reasons why it had never been disclosed.

" The woman with whom myself and my twin brother had been placed at nurse lost her own child very shortly after she had received us, and it occurred suddenly to her husband (a bold, bad man, to whom crime was as familiar as the breath he drew, though at the time mentioned he bore a fair character before the world) that it would be an excellent speculation for future profit to retain one of the twins in the place of his own child, and pass off the dead infant as the twin thus substituted. His wife, a timid, nervous woman, completely under the control of her desperate husband, dared not object, and the farmer's babe was accordingly buried by my parents as their own child.

" The villain who arranged this deception had determined to keep the child for some years, when he hoped by producing it, as if in a fit of remorse, to reap a large reward for the restoration. His plans, however, were defeated by the unexpected discovery of some crime which he had committed, and

he was slain in a desperate encounter with the officers of justice who were endeavoring to arrest him.

" His widow, cast off by the world, sunk to the lowest depth of the social scale, and it may be imagined that the training he received in such society as she was compelled to keep, totally unfitted my brother for resuming his place with his kindred. Fearing the consequences to herself, she dared not acknowledge the crime, even after her husband's death, but she carefully preserved the proofs of the child's identity, consisting of her husband's affidavit, and a detailed account of the crime, describing the personal marks of the babe.

" These papers she jealously guarded in secret until my brother was fourteen years old and she found herself dying. She then revealed to him the secret of his birth and produced the proofs, restraining him, by awful threats of supernatural visitation, from flying at once to his real mother and disclosing the terrible tale. She sent him to me, however, and he easily found me, as our dwelling-place was well known. I obeyed her summons at once, and, at the side of her death-bed, listened to the fearful tale with feelings that it would be impossible to describe. When she finished she made me take an oath to befriend my brother as long as I lived, and from him another to follow my advice in all things that concerned our secret.

" I did not doubt, from the first, that Harold was my twin brother, and when we came to compare ourselves before a mirror the extraordinary resemblance between us completed the proof beyond the shadow of a doubt. I saw clearly, however, the difficulties of our position. On the one hand was his street education, and his coarse and vicious manners. On the other my step-father's enmity and tyrannical disposition. Hating me already, how could he be brought to tolerate a street-boy as my brother? And before all, the first consideration was *our mother*!

" For many years she had deemed her other child dead, and time had soothed her grief. Would it be well to tell her that she had been so fearfully deceived? If she knew the truth she would certainly acknowledge her child, but my father's anger would visit her sorely. These were weighty considerations, and even to my young understanding they

assumed their due importance. I determined at once to save my mother from the sorrow that I was sure would follow such a disclosure, and at last I discovered the means to make my brother adopt my views. Harold, doubtless from his vicious education, was intensely selfish, and suddenly I perceived that his principal if not sole aim in insisting on recognition, was that he might no longer be obliged to work for his living. When I saw this my task became an easy one. Under my own father's will I received regularly a large allowance, and my step-father never condescended to inquire what I did with it. As I was never extravagant I had a large sum saved, and it was therefore in my power to support my brother entirely.

"When this fact was made known to him, he finally agreed to be guided by me in the whole matter, and our compact was ratified with the following conditions: He was to retain the proofs of his birth, and was to receive from me a sum of money sufficient to set him up as a gentleman, and a monthly allowance adequate to defray his every reasonable expense. He was to reside out of the town, and only to meet me on the days when his stipend was due. Finally, I agreed that should I fail in any particular, he was to be at liberty to press his legal claims. This singular agreement—almost incomprehensible when our youth and inexperience is recollected—was adhered to by both, religiously, during the whole time the necessity for it lasted.

"Time passed, and I learned to really love my twin brother, in spite of his wild and wayward character. We met much oftener than we had at first agreed, and on several occasions I introduced him into your father's house, where he slept by my side. At last I gave him a duplicate of my pass-key, with the understanding that he was not to use it unless he was sure that every one had retired. Your father must have seen him and mistaken him for me on several occasions when he used it, and I doubt not that your father's belief in my viciousness arose from the rumors of the excesses of which Harold was guilty.

"On the fatal night of which your father writes, I had entered the house and gone straight to my room without meeting any of the family. Soon after midnight I was

roused from sleep by the forcible opening of my door, and I then saw my brother enter hastily, displaying every sign of agitation and alarm.

" 'Oscar,' said he in a vehement whisper, 'you know that you lately promised me that you should leave the hateful bondage you are now enduring, and fly with me, whenever it became necessary. The time has arrived. I have most unfortunately had an unexpected and violent collision with our step-father, and I fear that in self-defense I have hurt him badly. He believes that it is *you* who thus fought with him, and he has gone for assistance to arrest you. Nothing but perfect freedom will enable you to prove yourself innocent, for I shall fly and conceal myself at once. You must either reveal the secret you have so long concealed or suffer the consequence of my rash act. The only alternative is to fly with me, and when we are in a place of safety you can vindicate yourself by placing the blame where it really belongs.'

" This reasoning, weak as it was, decided me, foolishly, to adopt his suggestion. My only excuse is that I did not know the real truth, and had no idea that any one, much less my mother, was seriously hurt. I dressed myself hurriedly and followed him out of the window. He sprung at once into the road, and I clambered down the trellis of the porch, which accounts for the sounds heard by your father. Within two hours we were on board a vessel bound to the Havana, and by sunrise were passing the bar into the open sea.

" Of our future lives I must speak more briefly. I obtained a clerkship in a mercantile house in Havana, and after many years was made a partner. Harold found a berth as mate of a trading schooner. From time to time he paid me short visits, but I knew little of his affairs save that he was still a sailor. The senior partners in our firm, retiring at last, left me and one other to carry on the business, and I was in fair way of becoming independent, when, through the villainy of Don Manuel Ferrara, I was led into business complications which ruined me, the greater part of my wealth passing into his hands.

" In the very hour of my greatest despair and wrath, my brother suddenly arrived at my house, suffering from a

severe wound. He died on the day after his arrival, but not before he had confessed to me the following strange facts: It appeared that he had obtained, some years before, the command of a schooner, and, having sailed to England, he received a commission to cruise after pirates in the eastern seas. It must have been on this voyage to England that he killed Ellen's husband, as the date agrees with the narrative of the mate. After a time Harold had turned freebooter himself, and at the time of his death was in command of the *Rayo-centella*. I had often heard of this vessel, but, of course, without imagining that Harold had any thing to do with her piracies. He described to me where he had left her and how I could reach her, urging me to visit her, and secure the wealth he had collected on board, telling me that I might pass for himself, with the crew, through our great resemblance.

"After his death, urged by the desperate state of my affairs, and my desire for revenge on the villainous Spanish agent, I sought out the ship, and by closely copying his dress and manner was received by the crew as their real commander. Only one of them—the man whom I shot for insulting Ella—ever suspected me. The Spanish vessel from which I took Ella, was the only one I ever attacked, and I should not have captured her, but that she was owned by the villain who had ruined me, Don Manuel Ferrara.

"The rest of my story is well known to you, and I solemnly declare that I have now stated the whole truth. Humbly commanding my soul to the mercy of God, and begging forgiveness from all whom I may have injured, I gladly resign a life which has been misery indeed."

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE REAL HEIRESS APPEARS AT LAST.

"This accident and flood of fortune
So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust my eyes."

Twelfth Night.—SHAKSPEARE.

THIS precise vindication of their step-brother enabled Ella and Lewis to cherish his memory with tenderness, while for his unfortunate brother they could make the excuse of his evil education; he was more to be pitied than condemned. From this time Ellen devoted herself to soothing the last moments of the long-suffering Oscar, and she had the satisfaction of knowing that before he died he had cast his sins upon the Cross. He breathed his last praying for Ella's happiness, and he was buried, with his mother, by the side of her husband, who now knew that Oscar was not the villain he had deemed him.

It really seemed that the last prayer of the unfortunate Oscar had been heard, for a new joy, entirely unlooked for, was about to enter into Ella's life. Some weeks after the burial of her step-brother, she accidentally found the second paper which had been in the iron-box. This contained a full account of the manner in which Sea Weed had been left in the miser's care, and from all the circumstances, as well as the name of "Gerald Foster," together with the narrative of the mate, Ella finally concluded that the infant must have been her own child. This new mystery she at once confided to Lewis, who instituted a vigorous search for the foundling. For some time this was without result. The earl's household knew nothing of Sea Weed's early history, and, as it chanced, she was not personally questioned. One day, however, when Ella and Lewis were sitting with Lawrence and Sea Weed in the lower room of the old house, the silence, which had lasted some time, was broken by Ella, who, weak and ill, reclined upon a couch by the fire.

"It is very singular, Lewis," she said with a deep sigh;

"there *must* be some one still living who knew how my father disposed of the child."

"It is very strange, Ella," replied Lewis: "but no one seems to know. I saw the lawyer Hendrik Schloss last, and I thought, at first, he had given me a clue. He told me that there *was* a child who had been brought up by our father, as a servant; but he extinguished my hopes again by saying that the child was apprenticed to my father by the city, and had disappeared soon after the funeral."

"Why, *that was me!*" exclaimed Sea Weed, rising and coming forward to the couch. "I was the child that lived with your father."

"You!" exclaimed her hearers, staring eagerly at the young girl.

"Were you my father's apprentice?" continued Lewis, a faint hope dawning on his mind.

"No, I never knew that I was his apprentice," replied Sea Weed. "I am certainly the child who was brought up by him; but I never knew that I was bound to him in any way."

"But how—how did you—in what way were you confided to his care?" exclaimed Ella, her voice faltering with fearful emotions.

In a few simple words, Sea Weed, who had often heard the facts from her nurse, began to explain the story of her advent, but before she had completed three sentences, she was astonished to see Ella rise from the couch and stand before her, struggling to speak.

"My child! My child!" was all that the long-suffering mother could force her trembling lips to utter, as she opened wide her loving arms to receive her long-lost daughter.

In utter bewilderment, Sea Weed turned to Lewis, as if to seek an explanation of a scene she could not understand.

"My dear girl!" said Lewis, hastily but solemnly; "God's providence has restored you to your mother!"

"My mother!" almost shrieked the astonished maiden—and the next moment she was closely clasped to that loving heart which had so long mourned for her in dust and ashes.

Mere words will not do justice to a scene so holy, and we tenderly draw the vail upon it. The explanations which

ensued, when they became calm enough to realize their happiness, were very simple, and as they are embodied in our narrative, we need not now repeat them. It was enough for the mother and her child that they were again re-united, and we will not be more exacting. As for Lewis Dale, it may be supposed he was well pleased that his son's betrothed should prove to be his own niece. Lawrence's love could not be strengthened by any accident of birth, but it was well to know that his wife was not unworthy of him, even on the score of descent.

Among the facts which Ella now related to her daughter, was the item that she had been christened "Saidee," the imperfect pronunciation of which by her infant lips, had, perhaps, given the idea of "Sea Weed" to her nurse. Lawrence, however, declared that he should always call her by the name under which he had first known her, and it is upon record in the archives of her family, that she was always called Sea Weed until her death.

The Earl of Bellamont and his family were equally pleased at this fortunate discovery, not that it increased their regard, but they could now introduce her into society, in which she soon became a favorite. All human happiness is fleeting, however, and before long it became evident that Ella was slowly sinking into the grave. Just as she began to realize the blessing which had so tardily been bestowed upon her, she found that she must resign it to accept the crown of immortality. Her life had been one long series of misfortunes, and joy came too late to reward her for her trials; but no murmur escaped her, and she sunk to rest, with her head resting on the loving heart of her child, imploring Heaven to so direct that daughter's footsteps on earth that she might re-join her in the mansions of the blest.

By Ella's will, the whole of her vast possessions were left, unreservedly, to her daughter, and thus, through the wonderful decrees of Fate, Sea Weed, the humble foundling, drudge and slave, became the sole heiress of the miser's wealth.

* * * * *

Just one year after her mother's death, Sea Weed gave her hand in marriage to Lawrence Dale. They were wedded at the mansion of the Earl of Bellamont, through whose influence

Lawrence had been appointed lieutenant-governor of the colony, a position for which his talents, and his new rank as the husband of one of the wealthiest ladies in the province, eminently qualified him. His father had been promoted, and was now a captain in the British navy, but the marriage was delayed until he could arrive in his splendid frigate, and there was no happier guest present at the ceremony than our noble-hearted sailor. No one who had seen our heroine as the half-starved child, breaking sticks under the archway on Griffin's Wharf, could have dreamed that she was the same with that graceful, queenlike beauty, who, on that eventful evening, gave her hand where her heart had long been bestowed.

Lawrence Dale and his wife at once assumed the rank to which they were entitled among the aristocracy of our ancient city, and these descendants are still among the first families of the land. The old house and Griffin's Wharf, the scene of so much sin and sorrow, were, in course of time, destroyed, and there is not the slightest trace remaining to indicate where they stood. Thus, daily, out of the rugged pathway of our lives, perish the landmarks which would prove our best guides and counselors ; and the scene of a mighty deed, which would incite us to emulate its nobility, or the stage of a dark tragedy, which would teach us to shun crime, vanish utterly from the theater of the world, as though they had never existed.

THE END.

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The Two Romans. For two males.
Trying the Characters. For three males.
The Happy Family. For several 'animals.'
The Rainbow. For several characters.

How to Write 'Popular' Stories. Two males.
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The Greenhorn. For two males.
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The Old Lady's Will. For four males.
The Little Philosophers. For two little girls.
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The Virtues. For six young ladies.
A Connubial Eclogue.
The Public meeting. Five males and one female.
The English Traveler. For two males.

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Escaping the Draft. For numerous males.

The Genteel Cook. For two males.
Masterpiece. For two males and two females.
The Two Romans. For two males.
The Same. Second scene. For two males.
Showing the White Feather. 4 males, 1 female.
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What the Ledger Says. For two males.
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